

Protein, Are you getting enough?

How much protein do you eat? Do you even care? Well, after you read this and understand protein's role in maintaining your health, energy and especially a steady weight, you may want to pay a lot more attention to how and when you eat it.

So, whether you realise it now, or not just yet, protein is responsible for the growth, maintenance and repair of every cell in your body. Most importantly it is responsible for maintaining your muscle cells.

What does all this have to do with health or body fat loss? As you are about to learn it has everything to do with it. If you want to feel healthy and have loads of energy it's vital that you look after your muscles and 'feed' them with protein. Your muscles act like an energy power station as long as 2 things happen. You use them regularly and you 'feed' them regularly with protein.

In order to use your muscles regularly they need to be challenged. You can challenge them in many different ways the best being strength training. So, for every 30mins of strength training you start to do from now on you will be using your muscles or 'stimulating' them to produce energy. Intensity is the key here, so, the more intense your training the better.

Here's an example:

If you do a 30min walk, your muscles will burn about 120 calories. Soon after you stop, your muscles stop burning those extra calories. This would be considered a low intensity workout.

When you do a 30min strength training session, i.e. lifting weights, your muscles will burn about 210 calories. So straight away that's a 90 calorie difference. That's not even the good part. When you stop, your muscles keep going. This means that after a weight training session your muscles stay 'active' i.e. they keep burning calories, for at least 24 hours and, depending on how often you continue your training this can last 48-72 hours. That's 2-3 days of burning those extra calories!!

To keep your muscles 'active' you must 'feed' them. Strength training damages muscle cells, in a good way – it stimulates them to grow back stronger. As you have learned already protein repairs muscle cells.

So, every time you train and damage your muscles they cry out for protein to repair themselves. As long as you 'feed' them protein on a regular basis your muscles will stay 'active' and keep burning all those extra calories even when you're sleeping.

By keeping your muscles or your 'power stations' active all the time your body will have ample energy to do anything you want. And because your body will have all this energy it won't need a lot of body fat, which is basically a stored energy reserve, only for emergencies.

If you tell your body you are starving by cutting calories it actually stores body fat that's why diets don't work. However, as you begin feeding your muscles and keeping them active you are now telling your body you have an abundance of easily available energy and so you start to get rid of the body fat you don't need.

A 30min weight training session 3 times a week will really get your metabolism ticking. It will help you to reach your ideal weight and energy goals. You will not get big or gain a lot of muscle. That will only happen if you want it to, train 6 days a week like a bodybuilder and eat a colossal amount of calories.

In order to optimize the effectiveness of your training you must eat protein approximately every 3 hours. This ensures your muscles get fed and stay active so you can keep burning calories 24/7.

The best natural protein sources are from meats, fish and organic eggs – chicken, turkey, beef, salmon, tuna, haddock, cod etc. The amount you require is dependent on a number of factors. You can use the size of your fist as a rough guide. Each portion should be about the same size of a clenched fist. E.g. 1 chicken breast, 1 salmon fillet, 3 organic eggs.

Protein shakes are great for convenience. Make sure they have very little carbohydrates in them as they just add unnecessary calories. Protein shakes should supplement a good eating plan full of real living food not substitute it.

Remember protein is the key to fat loss. You've never heard of a low protein diet and that's because without protein, it would be impossible to lose weight.

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