

## Protein

By Belinda Harvy

### What is Protein?

Protein is a nutrient needed by our cells, for repair and growth in the body. It is made up of amino acids called peptides, which are broken down by the stomach enzyme called protease (just as lactase breaks down lactose in milk). The individual amino acids are then converted into protein, where the body then uses it where needed.

### Why do I need Protein?

- **Builds Muscle and Increases Strength**  
Protein is needed for many purposes in the body, but most importantly it helps build and repair muscle tissue. It assists with increasing strength, helping weak or damaged muscle regenerate, improving overall tone and function of the entire muscle. It is vital for anyone wanting to increase muscle mass and maintain quality of existing muscle. Also protein is very important after injury or illness to help rebuild the body.
- **Burns Fat**  
Protein takes at least 200% more energy to digest and metabolize than fat or carbohydrate. Even though it yields the same calories as carbohydrate foods, it may help weight loss if some protein is exchanged for your carbohydrate needs. Protein also makes you feel more satisfied and full longer, as the amino acids act as time released energy capsules, which keep blood sugar levels more balanced. This will help keep energy levels up, metabolism higher and fewer cravings for sweet foods.
- **Improves Mood and Immune System**  
There are well documented improvements noticed from increased protein in the diet. Having more stable blood sugar levels are likely to be the reasons for improved mood and wellbeing.

### How Much Protein Do I Need?

Depending on your needs the amount of protein needed by your body can vary. Several well controlled studies have suggested the following amounts are per kg of body weight as a guideline:

- Recommended Daily Allowance (low active people) – 0.8g/kg per day
- Light to Moderately Active People – 1.0g/kg per day
- Endurance Athletes / Teenagers – 1.5g/kg per day
- Weight Training, to build muscle or people under stress – 2g/kg per day

For example, a 70kg male undertaking weight training should consume around 140grams of protein per day.



## Dietary Sources of Protein

Protein can be derived from both animal and vegetable foods depending on your own individual taste, dietary preferences and needs.

Top 10 Protein Foods (per 100g serving):

Soy Protein Isolate and Whey Protein Isolate	80 - 90g
Spirulina	55g
Parmesan Cheese	38g
Lamb, trimmed and grilled	35g
Beef, topside, round rump	32g
Chicken and Turkey breast, grilled	30g
Protein Bars	30 - 40g
Salmon, grilled or steamed	27g
Almonds, raw	22g
Soybeans, cooked	16g
Egg whole, boiled, fried, poached	14g



## What about Protein Powders?

Many people use protein powders for specific purposes, especially active sports people and body builders. But not all protein powders are equal!

- *Ion Exchanged Ultra filtered Whey Protein Isolate* is the highest quality protein. It contains approximately 85 – 95% protein and is generally higher in Branched Chain Amino Acids (BCAA). It is also more easily absorbed by the body for quick muscle gain and may also help to reduce body fat.
- *Hydrolyzed Whey Protein Isolate* is often sought after by bodybuilders in the belief that it is better & more quickly absorbed by the body. However, other than an often higher price tag, there is little difference in benefits compared to a quality *Whey Protein Isolate*.
- *Whey Protein Concentrate* is a cheaper alternative containing about 75-85% protein, but can also be higher in fat and sugars.

## Can you have Too Much Protein?

Although protein plays an important part in your diet, you still need to balance protein consumption with quality carbohydrates and fats. Contrary to recent fad high-protein diets, which can be harmful to your body long term, it is best to include a broad range of foods to fuel your body.

Some common side effects of excess protein consumption are constipation, flatulence and body odour. Excessive amounts of dietary protein may also increase the risk of colon cancer, kidney stones and undigested proteins can become antigens in certain people resulting in allergies.

It is important to consult a health professional if embarking on any change in diet or new health program. Consumers should be aware that there is a great deal of misleading published information about protein consumption and poor advice can do more harm to your health than good.

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