Add More Protein

Protein is a very important topic that we are hearing a lot about lately. Protein has not been greatly promoted in the past due to the high content of saturated fat but we can choose more options that are low-fat or contain healthy fats such as poultry, fish, beans, nuts, and seeds. Since protein is essential for building, maintaining, and repairing body tissues via amino acids, we certainly need to include it in our diet. All protein is broken down to amino acids in the body to supply the above mentioned processes and the body does not store amino acids like it does carbohydrates and fats. The proteins in our bodies are constantly being broken down and replaced so we must take in protein on a consistent basis.

Dietary Protein and Health

High-protein diets have received a lot of attention when it comes to health and wellness. Research suggests that increasing the amount of protein and decreasing the amount of carbohydrates consumed can have beneficial effects on metabolic health and body composition. Initially, high-protein diets were considered part of the fad diet trend. However, over the last ten years, numerous studies have been published supporting the importance of increasing protein while decreasing carbohydrate in the diet. New research demonstrates that dietary protein intakes above minimum requirements (0.8 gram per kilogram body weight) can improve health by treating or preventing diseases such as obesity, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and muscle loss.

For most adults, replacing some dietary carbohydrates, such as sugars and refined grain foods, with protein will result in favorable health outcomes – improved body composition, decreased cholesterol and improved blood glucose and insulin levels. Recent research shows that approximately 30 grams of protein should be consumed per meal to see favorable health outcomes. Consuming this amount of protein has been shown to stimulate the body to build muscle, help you feel full and even increase the amount of energy expended at rest.

Diets with higher protein (30 percent of daily energy intake) and reduced carbohydrate (40 percent of daily energy intake) are beneficial for weight loss. Some weight loss studies report that diets higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates increase weight loss, increase loss of body fat and reduce loss of skeletal muscle mass. It has been suggested that this is due, in part, to increased satiety after consuming a high-protein meal, resulting in decreased calorie intake.

High protein diets have also been shown to reduce serum triglyceride levels and increase HDL ("good") cholesterol concentrations. High-protein diets are shown to decrease blood pressure, a major risk factor for coronary heart disease. However, these effects are only observed with diets targeting weight loss.
How much protein do you need?

Protein needs for adults depend on an individual’s body weight and are often expressed as a percentage of energy intake. The current Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) for protein state that an acceptable protein range for adults is 10 to 35 percent of total daily energy intake. The current minimum Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein for adults is 0.8 gram of protein per kilogram body weight. This is equal to 56 grams of protein per day for a 150 pound person.

Current research and expert opinion, however, show that the RDA for protein of 0.8 gram per kilogram of body weight may not be adequate as we age. The current RDA was made based on research in young adults and does not promote optimal health or protect older adults from loss of muscle and function with aging. Experts now estimate that older adults need 1.2 grams or more of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. Additionally, researchers recommend that an adequate amount of protein intake with each meal is important to promote protein anabolism (or protein building). These recommendations state that an intake of 25 to 30 grams of high-quality protein per meal is necessary for optimal muscle protein synthesis. Protein intakes at this level are particularly beneficial for older adults as a strategy to maintain muscle mass.

How Do You Know Which Foods Are Good Sources of Protein?

Top Non Vegetarian Sources of Protein
- Beef flank – about 31 grams per 4 ounces
- Sirloin (beef) – about 34 grams per 4 ounces
- Chicken breast – about 30 grams per 4 ounces
- Ground beef – about 30 grams per 4 ounces
- Pork loin or tenderloin – about 29 grams per 4 ounces
- Haddock – about 27 grams per 4 ounces
- Lobster – about 25 grams per 4 ounces
- Ham – about 19 grams per 4 ounces

Top Vegetarian Sources of Protein
- Pumpkin seeds – about 34 grams per 4 ounces
- Chickpeas – about 21 grams per 4 ounces
- Mixed nuts – about 19 grams per 4 ounces
- Cottage cheese – about 15 grams per 4 ounces
- Quinoa – about 16 grams per 4 ounces
- Greek yogurt – about 12 grams per 4 ounces
- Tofu – about 10 grams per 4 ounces
- Black beans – about 6 grams per 4 ounces

Six Ways to Increase Dietary Protein Intake
- Incorporate eggs, low-fat cottage cheese, low-fat yogurt, Greek yogurt or low-fat milk into your breakfast.
- Eat snacks high in protein such as Greek yogurt, nuts, nut butters and seeds.
- Add small amounts of meat and beans or legumes to casseroles, pasta and soups.
- Eat meat several meals a week, but replace high fat cuts of meat with lean meats.
- Incorporate more plants and vegetables that are high in protein in your diet (beans, barley, peas, broccoli, etc.)
- Eat fish several times a week.

Scrambled Eggs in a Cup

**Ingredients**
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons low fat or fat-free milk
- 2 tablespoons shredded Cheddar cheese
- Salt and Pepper to taste or other favorite seasoning
  (the less salt, the better)

**Directions**
Stir together eggs and milk in a microwave-safe coffee cup that has been sprayed with vegetable cooking spray. Microwave on high for 30 – 45 seconds, stir and microwave another 30 – 45 seconds. Top with low fat cheese.
Extension Get Fit in the New Year

These dark, cold winter months can be depressing so stoke up your flames by getting in shape! A great, inexpensive group strength training program is the University Of Arkansas Division Of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service’s Extension Get Fit strength training program! Whether you have been trying to stay fit or you have been too busy with other things, the Extension Get Fit program can meet your strength training needs. Classes began accepting new participants January 23rd. Come join us anytime! Six classes are being offered throughout Boone County. Times vary depending on class. To learn more about the program, contact the Extension office at 741-6168.

Why Extension Get Fit?

This research-based program offers a variety of possibilities including the Strong Women and Men program and other routines using equipment such as stretch bands, stability ball, medicine balls, free weights, floor mats, etc. This program reaches all major muscle groups and can also include emphasis on lower back or small joints. Also, safety always comes first. Exercises may be tailored to each individual’s needs and fitness level. Extension Get Fit is safe, structured, and affordable. It is appropriate for all fitness levels, provides a supportive group environment, and it’s fun!

Are you getting enough of the right types of exercise?

Current exercise guidelines recommend that adults regularly engage in three types of physical activity: 1) cardiovascular, aerobic or endurance (75–150 minutes per week of walking/ jogging, etc.); 2) strengthening or resistance training (2-3 times per week of weight lifting, stretch bands, resistance machines, etc.); 3) stretching or flexibility (performed every day or at a minimum after completing above exercises).

In addition to the general guidelines, older adults should add balance exercises to their fitness routines. The Extension Get Fit program provides 2 out of the three. While the program focuses on strength training, it also includes stretching and flexibility.

Why strength train?

Strength training improves:
- Muscle mass
- Strength and balance
- Bone density
- Arthritis symptoms
- Metabolism
- Blood sugar and Cholesterol
- Mood and attitude
- Decreases depression
- Allows you to sleep more soundly
- Increases energy level
- Socially, allows you to enjoy others’ company and build a new circle of friends

We in the Extension Get Fit program are looking forward to getting fit and feeling better in the New Year. We hope you will join us. Again, for more information or to get one started in your area, contact the Boone County Extension office at 741-6168.
Bean Breakfast Burrito

Ingredients
1 1/3 cups black beans (cooked, mashed with 1 teaspoon canola oil, or use canned vegetarian refried beans)
4 tortillas, corn
2 tablespoons red onion (chopped)
1/2 cup tomatoes (chopped)
1/2 cup salsa, low-sodium
4 tablespoons yogurt, non-fat plain
2 tablespoons cilantro (chopped)

Directions
1. Mix beans with onion and tomatoes.
2. Microwave tortillas between two sheets of slightly damp white paper towels on high for 15 seconds.
3. Divide bean mixture between the tortillas.
4. Fold each tortilla to enclose filling.
5. Place on microwave-safe dish and spoon salsa over each burrito.
6. Microwave on high for 15 seconds.
7. Serve topped with yogurt and cilantro.

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science