



Protein



Protein is one of the major macronutrients in our food. It provides energy to the body and is used to build muscles and organs.

Key Facts

- Found in both animal and plant products
- Other healthy sources include soybeans, nuts and whole grains
- Different types required for various functions, such as movement (muscles), growth (hormones) and sight

Key Benefits

- Helps build and repair body tissues
- Provides energy and stamina
- Satisfies hunger and gives a feeling of fullness
- Supports lean muscle mass

Proteins are made up of *building blocks* called amino acids. Many of these amino acids are *essential*, meaning the body cannot produce them, and thus they must be obtained through food intake. When a protein contains all the essential amino acids, it is considered a *complete protein*. Soy protein and all animal sources of protein are considered *complete*.

If one or more of the essential amino acids is missing, the protein is considered *incomplete*. With the exception of soy protein, vegetable sources of protein are considered incomplete. However, two incomplete plant proteins, such as rice and beans, can be complementary, if consumed together.

Most protein in our diet comes from both animal (meats, fish, poultry, eggs and milk) products, as well as plants (beans, lentils and peas). Protein powders, made from soy, whey or egg whites, can also be added to other foods to boost their protein content.

Our bodies require protein to build and repair muscle tissue (especially after exercise), produce important enzymes and hormones, support our immune system, and keep our energy and stamina levels high.

Daily protein requirements depend on your age, size, fitness level and lifestyle. In general, large (200lb), physically active males should consume between 100 g to 200 g per day, while small (100lb), physically active females should have between 50 g to 100 g per day.

Did You Know?

The human body cannot survive if protein stores drop below 50 percent.