

The Protein Package



Protein is an essential macronutrient, but not all food sources of protein are created equal, and you may not need as much as you think.

Protein is found throughout the body – in muscle, bone, skin, hair and virtually every other body part or tissue. It makes up the enzymes that power many chemical reactions and the hemoglobin that carries oxygen in your blood. At least 10,000 different proteins make you what you are and keep you that way.

Protein is made from twenty-plus building blocks called amino acids. Our bodies do not store amino acids, our bodies make them in two different ways: either from scratch or by modifying others. There are nine essential amino acids that our bodies cannot make that must come from food.

Protein and Human Health

When we eat foods for protein, we also eat everything that comes alongside it: the different fats, fiber, sodium and more. It's this protein "package" that's likely to make a difference for health.



4oz Broiled Sirloin Steak is a great source of protein (33g) but it also delivers 5g of saturated fat.



1 Cup of Cooked Lentils provides 18g of protein and 15g of Fiber and it virtually has no saturated fat or sodium.

Available evidence indicates that it's the source of protein, rather than the amount of protein, that likely makes a difference for our health.

The Bottom Line

Protein is a key part of any diet. Protein is found in an abundance of foods, many people can easily meet this goal. However, not all protein packages are created equal. Foods contain a lot more than just protein thus it is important to pay attention to what else is coming with it.

Get Your Protein from Plants When Possible

Eating Legumes (beans and peas), nuts, seeds, whole grains and other plant-based sources of protein is a win for your health and the health of the planet.

Upgrade Your Sources of Animal Protein

Poultry (chicken, turkey, duck) and a variety of seafood (fish, crustaceans, mollusks) are your best bet.