

Did You Know This About Protein?

by Michael D. Allen, DC, NMD

Want to be healthier? One of the best ways is to eat more complete protein.

Of the trilogy of dietary needs—protein, carbohydrate, and fat—protein is king. Proteins can remake themselves into carbohydrates or fats pretty easily. However, while carbohydrates and fats can become non-essential amino acids, these transitions require considerable energy consumption. (That's one reason why high protein diets are wonderful as weight loss programs.) We also require vitamins and minerals, but for the sake of this discussion protein is our focus.

Sources

I often ask my patients about their protein intake. Their most popular response is, "I eat a lot of protein; at least one or two servings a day." So next I ask them about their protein sources: "Where do you get your protein?" They most often mention red meat, poultry, fish, and eggs.

Based on what most people say about their protein intake, I am not sure they really understand protein's importance in their diet. Unless these people eat their red meat, poultry, fish and eggs raw they probably are not getting their full array of amino acids.

Protein Make-up

Proteins are made up of tightly bound chains of about 20 different amino acids. These amino acids link together in numerous sequences to form our structure—bones, muscles, and skin—and generate our function. The many different protein sequences become enzymes—i.e., the functional units of cellular metabolism—support a strong immune system, form hormones and create neurochemicals.

Heat Sensitive

Of these 20 different amino acids, nine of them are considered "essential" to our diet because our bodies cannot make them from scratch; they are indispensable to every person's diet. A few of the essential amino acids can withstand heat whereas several of them are more heat sensitive; they are said to be *heat labile*, i.e., destroyed or altered by heat. When exposed to heat that is not much above normal body temperature, a few of these heat labile amino acids disappear. They first unravel—or denature—and then they become unusable.

The loss of any amino acid for whatever reason alters protein's structure. The biochemistry then substitutes one of the more available amino acids with one that most closely resembles the one that vanished. Whenever a structure changes so does its function, and that functionally alters the way our tissues, enzymes, immune system, hormones and neurochemicals work.

How Much Protein?

In general, most authorities agree that a person should consume 1 gram of protein for every kilogram of body weight. To find out how many grams of protein you generally need each day, simply divide your body weight in pounds by 2 for a ballpark answer. For example, a 180 pound man needs about 90 grams of protein each day. If you are more active, increase your protein consumption.

Application

My patients often ask me if I meet my own protein needs. Here is my general plan: I consume plenty of protein every day. My breakfast is a blend of about 40 grams of protein powder in water mixed with *Almond Breeze*®, an organic greens powder, an organic berry powder, and *SP Complete*®—a whole food supplement that helps my liver stay squeaky clean. I eat a high protein mid-morning snack. Lunch is another 40 grams of protein powder in water. Then another high protein mid-afternoon snack. My dinners are protein rich—perhaps red meat, poultry, or fish—with vegetables, etc., and my sugars are low. The general rule: If you meet your essential protein goals during the day you can afford to eat any other protein rich food you like.

To be truly healthy, all the amino acids must be available in your daily diet. If optimal health is your goal, check out the quality and quantity of your protein intake. Keep it complete with no excess heat. You will actually feel the difference quickly!

Stay well!

For more information about eating healthy proteins, check out my first book entitled, *What Your Brain Might Say if It Could Speak*. To get your copy, go to www.brainbasedwellness.net, or go through www.Amazon.com.