Tips At Tech: Protein

- Sprinkle chopped nuts on your morning oatmeal for extra protein.
- Use low fat milk or soy milk in your coffee instead of cream. They both have less fat and more protein than cream.
- Spread 1 tablespoon of peanut butter on an apple.
- Try adding beans instead of meat to your salad for a change.
- Try hummus and pair it with crackers and raw vegetables for a high protein vegetarian meal on the go.
- Try a veggie burger for a lower fat alternative to a hamburger.
- Snack on nuts for a great high protein snack.
- Create-Your-Own omelet at the Union Bistro and fill it full of vegetables.
- Choose lean deli meats when building your own sandwich.
- Grab a yogurt for breakfast or snack. It’s a good source of protein when you’re on the go.

Fun Facts

- At least 10,000 different proteins make you what you are and keep you that way.
- The body cannot store protein, and any extra protein consumed is converted to energy and/or fat.
- When you don’t consume enough protein, your body steals it from your muscles.
- Amino acids are the building blocks of protein and it takes 20 of them to make a complete protein.
- Despite popular belief, it is absolutely possible to get enough protein through a vegetarian or vegan diet. There are even numerous vegan bodybuilders!

Protein

What Should You Eat?

References:

Texas Tech University Hospitality Services
www.smartchoices.ttu.edu
Protein is essential for our bodies, but the amount needed differs between individuals based on gender, height and weight, and activity level.

Protein can either be essential or non-essential. Essential proteins are those that cannot be made by the body and must be obtained by food, whereas non-essential proteins are made by the body.

Proteins are necessary for growth, tissue repair, immune function, making essential hormones and enzymes, energy, and preserving lean mass.

Health Effects of High Protein Diets

Protein is very satiating, and diets higher in protein can be an effective means to lose weight when they are planned correctly. However, high protein diets are associated with high amounts of saturated fat and low amounts of fiber. If you are eating a large amount of fatty animal foods (i.e., bacon, pork chops, and fatty cuts of beef), you are likely eating too much saturated fat. If you are looking to add more protein to your diet, turn to sources such as skinless chicken, turkey, fish, and nuts.

Fiber is often low in high protein diets because of the reduced emphasis of fruits and vegetables. Fiber is found only in plant foods, and has shown to be associated with decreased risk of cancer, obesity, and diabetes. When eating a diet higher in protein, be sure to eat large amounts of vegetables and fruits so that you get adequate vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Vegetable vs. Animal Protein

Protein can come from both animal and plant sources and both are treated the same by the body. The protein package is what makes the most difference.

For example, a 6-oz broiled porterhouse steak has 38 grams of protein but it also delivers 44 grams of fat, 16 of them saturated. A cup of cooked lentils has 18 grams of protein and less than 1 gram of fat, as well as vitamins, minerals, and fiber. So when deciding which foods to eat for protein, take a look at the whole package.

Tofu and other soy foods are also great meat alternatives, but don’t go overboard. Four to eight ounces per week is adequate. Also, be careful when choosing protein shakes and bars containing concentrated soy, because the health effects have not been thoroughly studied.

The best bet for getting adequate protein is to mix it up. Most reasonable diets provide plenty of protein to meet the needs of healthy people. Eating a diet with a variety of food will ensure that you get all the essential protein that your body needs. This is especially important in vegetarian diets as many plant proteins are incomplete and need to be paired (i.e., beans and rice).

How Much Do You Need?

The amount of protein needed by each individual cannot be answered in a one-size-fits all number. Activity level, sex, gender, height, and weight are all factors when it comes to protein requirements.

For healthy men and women 19-30 years old, the protein recommendation is .8 grams/kilogram/day or 10-35% of your daily caloric intake. This is approximately 56 grams of protein per day for men, and 46 grams per day for women. For athletes, the protein requirement is slightly higher and can reach up to 1 gram/kilogram/day for those individuals participating in intense strength training programs.

The USDA’s MyPlate recommends filling 1/4 of your plate with protein-rich foods. This includes lean meat and poultry, fish, and eggs. For vegetarians, this includes beans, pulses, nuts, soy products, and low fat meat alternatives. One serving of meat, fish, poultry, and tofu is 3 ounces and is approximately the size of a deck of cards, while one serving of beans and pulses is 1/2 cup cooked.

The bottom line is that consuming a wide variety of foods will ensure adequate protein intake. Be careful to watch portion sizes to prevent excess protein consumption as it may lead to health complications.