

Why Is Protein Important for Our Bodies?

Before Getting Started...

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your nutritionist:

- What do you know about protein?
- Which foods are high in protein?
- What do you think protein is used for in the body?

The Facts on Protein

Protein is a nutrient found in foods and drinks that can be used by the body to make energy. Some examples of foods with proteins include the following:

- Meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, milk, yogurt, and cheese
- Soy milk, edamame, tofu, tempeh, beans, peas, lentils, and hummus
- Nuts, seeds, and grains like oats, quinoa, and rice

What Does Our Body Use Protein For?

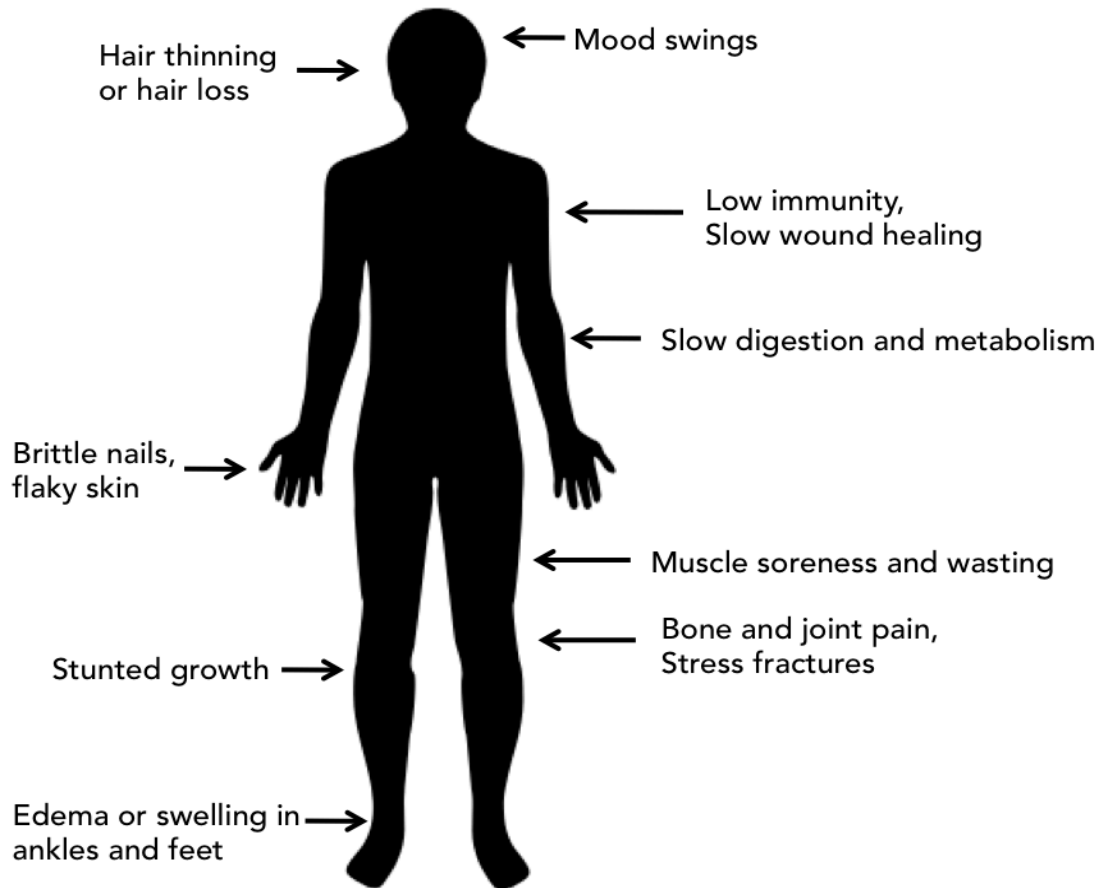
Protein from foods and drinks has many important roles in the body. Here are a few:

To keep hair and nails healthy, skin soft, and bones strong

- To repair muscles after exercise and rebuild tissues after an injury
- To make hormones that are needed for growth, muscle mass, and metabolism
- To make enzymes needed to breakdown protein, fat and carbs from food
- To distribute vitamins, minerals, oxygen, and fluid throughout the body
- To fight infections with antibodies and help heal cuts and wounds
- To increase the feeling of fullness after meals

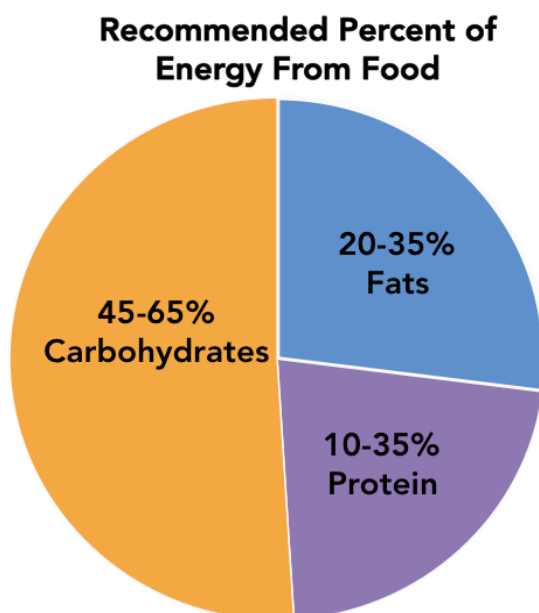


What Happens If I Don't Eat Enough Protein?



How Much Protein Does My Body Need?

The amount of protein that your body needs varies depending on your energy needs, body composition, and activity level.



Generally, it's important to try to have a source of protein at all meals and snacks.

Breakfast Examples:

- Egg, ham, and cheese omelet
- Greek yogurt with granola
- Turkey sausage with pancakes

Lunch/Dinner Examples:

- Quinoa and feta on a salad
- Grilled chicken in a wheat wrap
- Sautéed shrimp in pasta

Snack Examples:

- Hummus with pita chips
- Milk with a granola bar

What Does This Mean For Me?

Take a few minutes to think through the information shared in this handout and answer the questions listed below:

1. What are some foods that you eat or used to eat that provide your body with protein?
2. Have you noticed any signs that your body may not be getting enough protein?
3. What are some ways you feel comfortable making changes to your eating?

References:

Whitney, Eleanor Noss, and Sharon Rady Rolfes. *Understanding nutrition*. Cengage Learning, 2016.

Trumbo, Paula, et al. "Dietary reference intakes for energy, carbohydrate, fiber, fat, fatty acids, cholesterol, protein and amino acids." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 102.11 (2002): 1621.