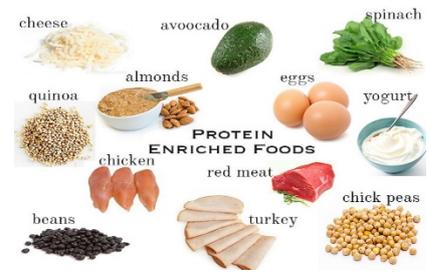


PROTEIN



Why is protein important?

Protein is the building block of the body and is responsible for the growth and repair. It also provides the body with 10-15% of its energy from food. It is made up of long chains of individual amino acids. Some amino acids are known as essential amino acids as they cannot be made or stored in the body. Therefore, they must come from the diet. As every protein has a different combination of amino acids, eating a varied diet including protein sources is always encouraged.

Amino Acids

In total there are 20 different amino acids found in animal and plant proteins, of which 8 are essential amino acids. The remaining amino acids are known as non-essential as the body is able to make them itself.

How much protein do we need to eat?

The British Nutrition Foundation states that for adults the average requirement of 0.6g of protein per kilogram bodyweight per day is estimated. The reference Nutrient Intake is set at 0.75g of protein per kilogram. This is approximately 56g/day for men and 45g/day for women.

Sources of protein

Protein in the diet can be obtained from both animal and plant sources.

Animal sources –Meat-Fish-Eggs-Dairy-Cheese-Milk-Yoghurts

Plant sources-Nuts-Seeds-Pulses-Cereals-Grains-Soya Products

As no single plant protein contains all essential amino acids, combining different proteins in the diet can help achieve this i.e. having beans on toast or milk with cereals.

Plant v Animal Sources

Animal protein are higher in saturated fat and often cooked in fat also.

Plant protein are also a very good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals. They are often low in fat unless fat is added during cooking/serving.

Eating too much red meat or processed meat has been linked to increased risk of bowel and stomach cancer.

Plant protein also contains phytochemicals, which act as antioxidants and are beneficial for disease prevention.

How much protein do foods contain?

120g chicken breast 45g

1 sausage 6g

150g rump steak 47g

120g salmon steak 30g

1 medium egg 8g

100g tinned tuna 24g

1 medium glass milk 5g

2 shredded wheat 5g

45g cheddar cheese

1 medium slice of white bread 3.4g

14medium slice wholemeal bread 3.6g

135g portion of baked beans 7g

Low protein diets

It may be necessary for some people to follow a low protein diet. This is not advisable unless there is a medical reason for doing so. This special diet will often be prescribed in the hospital setting by a dietitian.