

What you really need to know about protein

Protein powders. Protein bars. Pasta with extra protein. Even protein water and protein ice cream. The nutrient is very popular right now. But before you spend money on protein powder or add another helping of meat to your plate, stop and think. The truth is you probably already get more protein than you need just through your everyday meals.



Photo above by Marco Jan, below by Olga Kurbatova, courtesy iStockphoto

Quick facts on protein:

1 Protein is vital for your body. It helps your body grow and fix itself. It also helps build strong muscles. Protein is especially important for growing children and for older adults.



2 Your body only needs a small amount of protein each day. For a 140-pound adult, a cup of Greek yogurt, a medium size chicken breast and a handful of almonds is enough. But children and older adults should get a little more protein.

3 If you are a vegan or vegetarian or avoid meat, you can easily get your daily protein by eating

beans, nuts, seeds, tofu and other foods.

4 Protein does have its downsides. If you eat too much of it, you can gain weight, strain your kidneys and cause other harms. It can also make it more difficult to poop.

5 Don't forget other foods, like fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Strive for balanced meals.



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