

Do we really need to eat more protein and is there a downside?

For some of us the attractiveness of losing weight whilst gorging on steak, cheese and burgers is irresistible.

High protein-low carbohydrate diets, such as the Dukan diet, provide the big green light to consume higher amounts of proteins whilst limiting carbohydrates. Furthermore, protein products are now being marketed for faster recovery and muscle gain following a tough workout or hard

physical activity for the athletes amongst us. In fact, as consumers, we are increasingly exposed to products with a high-protein claim (these rose by 498% in the UK between 2010 and 2015). But, do we need to eat more protein than usual and is there a downside?



In general, our daily average consumption of protein exceeds the Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) of 0.75g of protein per kilogram bodyweight per day for adults by some margin: on average we eat 87g for men and 67g for women aged between 19 and 64 in the UK, whereas the RNI is 56g for men and 45g for women. For people lifting weights the reference is more at 1.2-1.7g/kg bodyweight of protein per day. However, your body will become stronger when training alone without protein supplements, although extra protein might provide a small gain (up to 8.5%) in strength. Therefore, with a balanced diet, or even a ketogenic diet, most of us are eating enough protein through normal food to be healthy.

The UK Department of Health advises against consuming more than twice the RNI value as excess protein might be harmful. Excess intake can lead to elevated levels of urea in the bloodstream, an additional burden on our kidneys and possibly increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

So, the advice would be that most people are consuming enough protein; excess consumption is offering marginal returns. Check the ingredient list on some 'high-protein' products compared to the normal version as these might be carrying additional sugar. A mixed diet of different protein sources is critical, such as grains and beans especially for vegetarian or vegans, and consume protein from non-processed foods to reduce inflammation.

Check out XenoVida's information sheet on How To Reduce Inflammation

https://www.xenovida.com/admin/apps/admin/uploads/documents/blogs/how_to_reduce_inflammation.pdf

<https://www.nutrition.org.uk/nutritionscience/nutrients-food-and-ingredients/protein.html?limitstart=0>

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24232260-200-protein-mania-the-problem-with-the-wests-latest-diet-obsession/>