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DON'T WISH FOR A HEALTHIER BODY. OWN ONE.

18 SEPTEMBER 2017



PROTEIN: YOUR SECRET WEIGHT-LOSS WEAPON

As you move along your weight loss journey, you might wonder why protein is so important, and if it really can help you lose weight. The answer is yes!

Protein is important because it helps you feel fuller longer. Having protein around slows down digestion making us more satisfied and less likely to go back for seconds. The three macronutrients (fats, carbs and protein) affect our bodies in different ways. Studies show that protein helps you feel more full, with less food. Part of the reason is that protein reduces your level of the hunger hormone ghrelin. It also boosts the satiety hormone peptide YY, which makes you feel full. This effect can be powerful. In one study, increasing protein from 15 to 30% of calories made overweight women eat 441 fewer calories each day, without intentionally restricting anything. If you need to lose weight then consider replacing some of the carbs and fats you are eating with protein. It can be as simple as making your potato or rice serving smaller, while adding a few extra bites of meat or fish.

A high-protein diet reduces hunger, helping you eat fewer calories. This is caused by improved function of weight regulating hormones.

Eating a lot of protein has numerous benefits for weight loss. It can help you lose more fat, and help you keep it off in the long-term

A higher protein intake has been shown to boost your metabolism significantly, helping you burn more calories throughout the day.



Eating plenty of protein can help reduce the muscle wasting associated with ageing.



Eating more protein has been shown to reduce cravings and desire for late-night snacking.



Just eating a high-protein breakfast may have a powerful effect.



PROTEIN REQUIRES MORE OF YOUR ENERGY

After you eat, some calories are used for the purpose of digesting and metabolising the food. This is the thermic effect of food. Not all sources agree on the exact figures, but it is clear that protein has a much higher thermic effect (20-30%) compared to carbohydrates (5-10%) and fat (0-3%). If we go with a thermic effect of 30% for protein, this means that 100 calories of protein only end up as 70 usable calories. Along with several other factors, a high protein intake tends to boost metabolism, and makes you burn more calories around the clock, including during sleep.



PROTEIN FUELS FAT BURNING

It is a scientific fact that your body cannot effectively burn and use fat as energy if it doesn't have help from either carbohydrate or protein. As you are losing weight, your body loses both muscle and fat. During this process it is important that you continue to eat enough protein in your diet. Having enough protein coming in from your food fuels fat burning while preserving calorie-burning lean muscle.

PROTEIN PROMOTES MUSCLE REPAIR & GROWTH

Your protein needs increase after exercise so increasing your protein intake on days that you exercise is beneficial. Additionally, if you lift weights consider having a high protein snack right after a training session when the muscle is sensitive to nutrients that it can use to repair and grow.



PROTEIN IS YOUR WEIGHT-LOSS PAL

Cravings and late-night snacking are a dieter's worst enemy, and one of the biggest reasons why people fail on their diet. Protein can have a powerful effect on both cravings and the desire to snack at night. A food craving is different to being hungry. It is not just about your body needing energy or nutrients, it is about your brain wanting a reward. Unfortunately, cravings can be hard to control. One way to overcome them may be to prevent them from showing up in the first place, you can do this by increasing your protein intake. It's also important to pair protein with carbohydrate-rich foods as this combination slows down the absorption of sugar from your stomach into your bloodstream, which could help keep your blood sugar from skyrocketing and subsequently keep cravings at bay.



Of course, losing weight is just the beginning. Sustaining the lost weight is actually a much bigger challenge. Just a small increase in protein intake has been shown to help with weight maintenance. If you want to lose weight, keep it off and prevent obesity in the future, then consider making a permanent increase to your protein intake.

Next week - High protein foods for weight-loss.

Cheryl Hicks offers Tonic patients complimentary support with motivation, health and well-being. Drop Cheryl an email on cherylhicks@me.com for free support and further information.