

NUTRITION SNACKS PROTEIN

Protein is a macronutrient found in a variety of foods. The highest sources of protein come from the Meat and Meat Alternatives group in the Grocery Guide and in smaller amounts in dairy, wholegrains, seeds and nuts.

We need protein from our diets as our bodies can't make protein, and we use it for cell growth and repair, as an energy source and to maintain muscle.

While protein is an essential nutrient, too much isn't healthy as it can mean drastically cutting back on other nutrients.¹

HOW MUCH PROTEIN IS NEEDED?

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends aiming for 15-25% of energy from protein. At Jenny, our menus are based on this recommendation which is considered moderate and on average provides 90g of protein a day, which will be higher or lower depending on the menu kilojoule level.

If a member is doing a lot of exercise, they may feel they need more protein, however this rarely the case as protein needs only increase at really high levels of

exercise and the Jenny Craig menus provide enough protein for most people.^{2,3,4}

While the Jenny Craig menus are designed to be moderate in protein, members who wish to add a little more protein can select some of their Grocery Serves with a higher protein content. For example, low fat milk and low fat, high protein yoghurts, choosing some beans or lentils in place of bread for Grain Serves and choosing nut butters as Fat Serves when on the menu.

PROTEIN AND WEIGHT LOSS

Protein doesn't have any special properties that enhance weight loss over the long term. In fact, the Dietitians Association of Australia reviewed the evidence around higher protein for weight loss. They found higher protein diets may lead to faster initial weight loss, however after just 4 months it was as effective as lower protein. Based on this evidence, they don't recommend not to focus on high protein but to choose a diet that is sustainable.⁵

In addition, there is some evidence protein can help the feeling of fullness, but it isn't the only food involved as other foods can also help, such as fibre.⁵ Fullness will be covered in another episode of Nutrition Snacks.

KEY MESSAGES

- 1 Protein is an important nutrient found in a range of foods.
- 2 No one nutrient causes weight gain or enhances weight loss.
- 3 The Jenny Craig menu has a moderate amount of protein and members can boost their protein by carefully selecting their Grocery Serves if they wish.

REFERENCES

1 National Health and Medical Research Council, 2006. Nutrient Reference Values, <https://www.nrv.gov.au/>

2 Sports Dietitians Australia, Protein Supplementation, <https://www.sportsdietitians.com.au/factsheets/supplements/protein-supplementation/>

3 Gui, Z. 2017, Effect of protein and carbohydrate solutions on running performance and cognitive function in female recreational runners, PLOS One <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185982>

4 Saidi, O. 2017, Intake of carbohydrate-protein supplements by recreational users at gyms: Body composition improved? Science and Sports, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scispo.2018.02.004>

5 Dietitians Association of Australia, 2011. DAA Best Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults.