

[IMAGE]

Are High Protein Diets Healthy?

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Most of my patients, in my clinic of integrative medicine in San Jose CA, will tell you that I am more of a fan about eating a higher protein diet than I am at eating a higher starch diet. But, no matter how good something can be for your health, too much is never good in regards to anything in life. This is the same when it comes to a high protein diets.

As we all know, there are always two sides to any story. This is true of high protein diets. Because I have a lot of pre-diabetic or diabetic patients in my clinic, I usually prefer a diet that is higher in protein and less in starch. I favor carbohydrates in the form of vegetables and plants. I do not like starch in the form of processed foods like breads or pastas or crackers or bars. These to me are not foods that Mother Nature approves of therefore they have a higher likelihood of slowing down our metabolism and causing inflammation/health issues in our body.

So, what is the diet I like my patients to eat?

I usually prefer my patients to eat a diet that is predominantly vegetables in every color of the rainbow and then lean low saturated fat proteins along with healthy fats are meant to help sustain energy. The protein versions I prefer are plant-based in legumes and nuts, for example. But lean healthy proteins like fish and chicken or turkey breast I am fine with as well. The healthy fats I prefer my patients to consume are in foods such as nuts, avocados, and olive oil, just to name a few. When it comes to whole grains, I am in favor of ones such as quinoa and faro. In other words, I would prefer whole grains over processed starches.

protein - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark So, are higher protein diets good for everyone? The answer is no.

There are various scenarios where higher protein diets can be a problem but the most common ones I want to caution you against are those with kidney disease, gout, and hypertension issues. In these people, you need to watch your protein intake and keep to a level your doctor has instructed you to stick to. For those of you who are not sure if your health dictates special concern about protein intake, you need to check with your physician as well as a registered dietitian.

For those of you with sugar issues or inflammatory diseases, the starches and non-vegetable carbohydrates can cause more health issues hence if you need to consume a diet slightly higher in proteins, you need to check with a registered dietitian about the exact amount you should be eating to stay within safe range and to keep your sugar and inflammatory disease issues in check.

The concept as to exactly how much protein you need in your meals depends on many factors including your height and weight, exercise/activity level, as well as your health status/diseases, just to name a few factors. Because this is a complicated issue and is very specific to each individual person, the safest thing to do is check with your doctor and if you have a dietitian, check with him or her as well.

Ultimately, the takeaway points are that too much of anything is not good. So, try to eat a balanced diet that is mostly plant-based with additions of healthy low saturated fat proteins, healthy fats and whole unprocessed grains. The exact amount of protein that is right for you will depend on your specific health status so don't be shy about asking your doctor and dietitian.

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