

[IMAGE]

The Best Time for Protein

By Editorial Staff

Protein is all the craze these days, and for good reason: it helps build lean muscle, assists in muscle recovery, reduces hunger cravings and helps maintain a healthy weight. What's more, including protein in your diet at adequate amounts means you're not filling your plate with too many carbs - particularly the refined variety. While the body needs carbohydrates for energy and other functions, it certainly has no need for refined carbs, the kind so prevalent in grocery stores and elsewhere. Cookies, crackers, white bread, etc. – all refined carbs.

So protein is good for you; but is there a "best" time to consume it? Yes, say researchers: with breakfast. That's not opinion; there's science behind it, according to a new study published in *Cell Reports*. The research shows that particularly if lean muscle growth is your goal, high-protein consumption between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. (i.e., breakfast) increases muscle hypertrophy (increase in size) and improves muscle function compared to high-protein consumption at night (i.e., dinner).

The reason: Physiologic functions including nutritional metabolic processes differ between day and night, according to the study authors. In terms of this conversation, it means protein and amino acids (molecules that combine to form protein) are more bioavailable in the morning than later in the day and certainly at night. Bad news for people whose go-to breakfast is a coffee and bagel; and even worse news for people who skip breakfast altogether and consider lunch their first meal of the day.

morning - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark A final note: For people who may shy away from recommendations that increase muscle mass, keep a few things in mind: 1) Lean muscle mass doesn't mean you'll get "bulky"; the more muscle (instead of fat), the better. 2) Lean muscle increases metabolism, which means you'll burn calories even at rest. 3) Muscle mass is increasingly important with age; it reduces fall risk and overall frailty, helping ensure you're a "lean, mean fighting machine" into your golden years!

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