

Protein and its role in healthy aging

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Protein is an important dietary component for all life stages and is a key ingredient in healthy aging. Having the recommended amount of protein each day helps seniors maintain muscle mass, fight infection and recover from an accident or surgery. Yet up to one-third of older adults don't eat an adequate amount due to reduced appetite, dental issues, and limited financial resources.

Build and maintain muscle mass

Combined with a regular exercise routine (including resistance training), protein in the diet helps build and maintain muscle mass for many health benefits:

- Increase strength, improve balance, prevent falls, support bone health, optimize metabolism for a healthy weight, increased energy, maintain mobility and independence
- Although some decrease in muscle mass (also known as sarcopenia) is normal during older adulthood, consistently eating enough protein can help slow or prevent the loss.

Be smart with diet choices

Five to six ounce-equivalents of protein per day is adequate for most people who are moderately active. Choose leaner protein sources such as skinless chicken, lean cuts of beef or pork, or low-fat or fat-free dairy products, to limit calories and saturated fats. Take advantage of other health benefits by incorporating plant protein a few times per week. Eggs are another nutritious choice that have the added benefit of being easier to chew. Always be sure to discuss any changes to your diet or physical activity plan with your doctor

*Sources: www.eatright.org/fitness/training-and-recovery/building-muscle/resistance-train-to-prevent-muscle-loss; www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/can-diet-help-with-inflammation; www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/040715p16.shtml;
www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/healthy-weights-for-healthy-older-adults;*

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