

## Want to Stay Lean & Mean as You Age: Reach for the Protein

Posted by Joan Salge Blake October 17, 2011 09:07 PM

Timing is everything in life, even when it comes to dietary protein. Research findings presented at the recent American Dietetic Association (ADA) Annual Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in San Diego suggest that not only is the amount of protein that you consume important, but also *when* you eat it during the day. Enjoying adequate amounts of protein foods, such as lean meat, fish, and poultry at *each* meal has been shown to **increase satiety**, or that feeling of fullness, and preserve lean muscle mass during weight loss and aging. Consuming adequate amounts of protein is also needed for the synthesis of protein in your muscles. This is especially important for adults as we all are naturally losing lean muscle tissue with each birthday.

The current recommendation for healthy Americans is to consume about 10 to 35 percent of your daily calories from protein. Americans, for the most part, are coming in at about 15% of their total calories from protein or about 75 to 95 grams daily.

To reap all of the benefits protein has to offer, you should distribute your protein intake more evenly among all three meals, according to Loren Ward, Ph.D., a presenter at the ADA conference. According to Ward and other **researchers**, your body becomes more resistant to muscle protein synthesis as you age. Thus, each meal should contain 25 to 30 grams of protein to encourage the synthesis of muscle protein *throughout* the day. "Daily distribution is important," states Ward. Unfortunately, while Americans, on average, are consuming adequate amounts of protein daily, they are typically consuming the majority of it at dinner. This lopsided meal pattern means that they are not enjoying the satiety factor that comes with enjoying protein-rich foods at each meal as well limiting their body's ability to maximize muscle protein synthesis during the day.

Now comes the dietary dilemma: According to the nutrition guidance associated with **MyPlate**, most adults should be consuming only about 6 ounces of foods from the protein group daily. Not exactly a bountiful amount. Limiting the amount of servings from the protein group daily is recommended to help keep heart-unhealthy saturated fat at bay. An excessive amount of dietary saturated fat can increase the "bad" LDL cholesterol in your blood, and therefore, your risk of heart disease.

So how can you beef up your protein intake within the context of a healthy diet?The answer is quite simple and even recommended as part of the MyPlate nutrition initiative:Add lean dairy to your meals.

Skim milk, nonfat yogurt, and/ or reduced fat cheeses can help provide additional protein at each meal.A [serving](#) of a cup of milk or yogurt, and/or about 1.5 to 2 ounces of reduced-fat cheese each provide about 8 grams of protein, which is actually a tad more than the 7 grams found in an ounce of lean meat, fish, or poultry.

While it's recommended to consume 3 servings of lean dairy daily, most adults are consuming only about half that amount.Satiety and muscle mass aside, increasing your dairy foods consumption will also provide calcium, potassium, and possibly vitamin D -- three nutrients that Americans are also falling short of in their diet.

You could do "your body good" by adding a serving of a lean dairy food at each meal.**Three is key** when it comes to dairy foods.

Try these **3 tips** to beef up your lean dairy intake at each meal:

- 1. Swap the cream in your morning java with low fat milk.**Depending on the size of your coffee, you could be adding a serving of milk to your breakfast.
- 2. Pile a slice or two of reduced-fat cheese onto your lunchtime sandwich.**Heart healthy turkey, chicken, tuna, and roast beef are lean protein sandwich fillers that blend well with cheese.
- 3. Finish off your dinner with a carton of your favorite nonfat yogurt topped with berries.**