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Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

Understanding Protein

Protein is one of the three macronutrients (the others being carbohydrates and fats) that is needed for your body to function properly. Protein is found in many sources such as: meat; poultry; seafood; beans; nuts; milk; cheese; yogurt; and eggs. Protein sources are made up of amino acids. There are two types of protein (amino acids): essential and non-essential. Essential amino acids are those that must come from the diet. Non-essential amino acids can be made by the body. Protein has many functions in the body. Some of the functions are to help build and maintain muscle and strength, aid in making new protein and enzymes, and help provide our body with energy. Protein provides 4 calories per gram of protein. Due to its other functions, protein is not the body's preferred source of energy compared to carbohydrates and fat. Protein is saved to help repair and protect the body's system.

When considering protein make sure to eat a variety of options. This will help ensure you are getting a variety of the essential amino acids and other amino acids. Don't forget to incorporate seafood and non-animal sources of protein in the diet.

When choosing animal products, be sure to choose the leanest options available to avoid any excess fat that is unnecessary in the diet. On the nutrition label of most ground products you will notice a number like 73/27. The first number shown indicates the amount of meat that is in the product. The second number is how much added fat is added to the product. To ensure you are choosing the most lean product, choose 90/10 or 93/7. The cooking

method that you choose also will help avoid excess fat. Try grilling, broiling, baking and roasting meats to preserve flavor without adding additional fat. Be sure to cook lean meats slow to avoid becoming tough and hard to chew. Be sure to thoroughly cook your meats to proper temperature to avoid any food-borne illnesses.

Be flexible in incorporating protein in your diet. Add nuts to salads or main dishes. It is also good to keep unsalted nuts around for a quick snack. Try different options to assemble a sandwich. Instead of bread, use wraps, pita bread or skip the bread all together and use lettuce! Be careful when you purchase lunch meat to avoid those high in salt and fat (like bologna).

Many people get plenty of protein in their diet. Recommended Dietary Allowance for protein is about 46 grams for women and 56 grams for men. Some medical diagnoses can alter your protein requirements. In most cases, protein does not need to be supplemented. For more individualized recommendations and further questions, consult your registered dietitian or primary care physician.



Have you considered going back to work?

Did you know that the month of September hosts the National Employ Older Workers Week? National Employ Older Workers Week, held annually the last full week of September, recognizes the vital role of older workers in the workforce. National Employ Older Workers Week aims to increase awareness of this labor segment. It shines a spotlight on the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). SCSEP is a community service and work-based job-training program for older Americans. The program provides training for low-income, unemployed seniors. SCSEP participants get real work experience in a variety of community service activities at non-profit and public facilities including schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and senior centers. The program provides over 40 million community service hours to public and non-profit agencies, allowing them to enhance and provide needed services. Per Department of Labor, participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest of federal, state or local minimum wage. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. Since its inception, SCSEP has helped over one million older Americans enter the workforce.

There are many benefits to becoming a SCSEP participant or obtaining unsubsidized employment for seniors. Many SCSEP participants state that the program has benefited them physically, socially, and financially. Research has shown that seniors aged 50 to 70 staying active physically and mentally either working or taking up new hobbies improves their chances

of staying healthier for longer. Per statistics from Department of Labor from (year 2015):

65,081 low-income older Americans received paid training in FY15

More than 2,000 public and nonprofit agencies (like libraries and senior centers) are supported with more than 34 million staff hours

51% of participants gained unsubsidized employment following the program

\$820 million in community service provided by SCSEP participants – nearly twice the total appropriation for the program

88% of participants reported the same or better physical health while working

72% reported a better outlook on life while working

People who remain in paid employment past retirement age or involved in community and voluntary work may improve their chances of staying healthier for longer.



References:

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<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dail/Pages/nutrition.aspx>