

Max out your muscles

Incorporate whey protein into your diet to help build healthy muscles. *by Karen Giles-Smith*

Building muscle is one of the big benefits of physical activity. More muscle means a stronger, leaner body that works overtime burning calories even after exercise. However, no matter how hard you work out, your body needs something more to maximize muscle—it needs a healthy diet with adequate protein, carbohydrate and calories.

“A common mistake people make when trying to get leaner and build muscle is that they don’t eat enough calories,” says Joe Carlson, PhD, RD, Director of Sports and Cardiovascular Nutrition at Michigan State University. The problem: If you eat fewer calories than you burn, your body will use protein for energy instead of for muscle-building.

“Don’t go into a workout poorly fueled or you will essentially chew up your muscle,” says Dr. Carlson. To give your body what it needs to make muscle, Dr. Carlson recommends:

- Several hours before a workout, eat a meal.
- About an hour before a workout, eat a small snack (about 250 calories) with carbohydrate (about 50 grams) and a modest amount of protein (about 10 grams).

• Within an hour after working out, eat a larger snack or meal with about 20 grams of protein, 100 or more grams of carbohydrate and a modest amount of healthy fat. “This all can be done with regular food,” says Dr. Carlson. “For example, a post-workout snack could include a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a glass of milk.”

As long as you’re eating adequate calories, getting enough protein usually isn’t a problem, even for athletes. But don’t overdo. Getting more protein than what’s recommended probably won’t boost muscle mass since there’s a limit to how much muscle the body can accrue at one time.

To build muscle, high quality protein is best. High quality protein contains a full array of amino acids (the building blocks of protein) that the body needs but can’t make on its own. Food sources include lean meat, poultry, fish, milk, yogurt, and eggs. Other excellent sources of protein are dried beans, soy products, nuts, and seeds.

What about whey protein? Remember Little Miss Muffet and her curds and whey? Whey protein is derived from cow’s milk. It’s available in powder form and as an ingredient

(whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolate or hydrolyzed whey protein) in products such as bars and beverages. Recent research in adults suggests that pairing whey protein with resistance exercise may help build muscle and reduce body fat.

“There’s some research and a lot of hype about whey protein,” says Dr. Carlson. “Athletes don’t need to spend money on whey protein products. The key is adequate calorie intake, proper timing of intake, and including a variety of quality protein sources, nutrient-rich carbohydrates and healthy fats.”

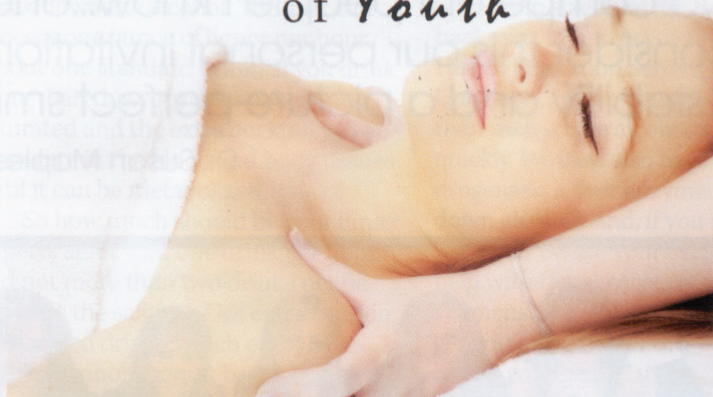
How much protein is right for you? For your daily protein needs (in grams), multiply your weight by the appropriate number below.

- Non-athlete: 0.4 (Example: 160 pounds x 0.4 = _____ g of protein)
- Athlete: 0.6-0.8 (Example: 160 pounds x 0.6 = _____ g of protein)



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