

Medical Minute

PROTEIN



I don't know about you, but it seems that the magic word these days is "Protein." It's added to just about anything—protein bars, pasta, oatmeal, pills, and probably throw pillows by next Tuesday. So how much do you need, and is just any kind of protein actually good for you?

Older adults need 1-1.3 grams of protein for every 2.2 lbs. of body weight. So, if my math is correct—and God knows, you better check it because I stink at math—a 150 lb. person should shoot for at least 68 grams of protein a day. This protein is found in meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or beans that you should eat in your 2-3 meals a day. Well, since I usually eat only once a day, that is not exactly a winning strategy for me.

This is where protein-fortified cereal, breads, and Greek yogurt come into play. But what about all this protein powder and all those shakes you now see literally EVERYWHERE? Be careful. Consumer Reports suggests they may not be so safe. High levels of heavy metals like lead were found. For more than two-thirds of the products analyzed, just a single serving exceeded the maximum dose of lead that its experts say is safe to consume in one day. So maybe don't treat protein powder like fairy dust and dump it into everything you eat. Don't panic, though. Unless you have continuous exposure, particularly at high doses, these supplements are generally more of an occasional thing than an everyday necessity. The good news is that people typically get enough protein from their diet alone—especially those who eat more than one meal a day. Show-offs.