

[ NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you. ]

## When Is The Best Time To Take Protein?



Protein supplements are some of the most popular supplements on the planet. People use them for a variety of reasons, including to build muscle, lose weight or simply improve their overall health and wellness.

However, many people wonder about the best time to take them.

This article explains when the best time to take protein is, depending on your health goals.

### There Are Many Types of Protein

When it comes to essential nutrients, protein sits atop the list.

It's a jack of all trades with many roles in the body. Protein is a source of energy, can help repair damaged tissue, is essential for growth and plays a role in preventing infection and disease.

Protein is naturally abundant in foods like meats, fish, eggs, dairy products, grains, seeds and legumes. It is also available as a dietary supplement, commonly known as protein powder.

Here are some of the most well-known protein powders you can buy.

- **Whey protein:** A dairy-based protein. It contains all the essential amino acids and is quickly absorbed.
- **Casein protein:** A dairy-based protein. It contains all the essential amino acids and is slowly absorbed, which is why people often take it before bed.
- **Soy protein:** A plant-based protein that contains all the essential amino acids. It has also been linked to some impressive health benefits.
- **Pea protein:** A plant-based protein. It has low levels of the nonessential amino acids cysteine and methionine.
- **Rice protein:** A plant-based protein with low levels of the essential amino acid lysine.
- **Hemp protein:** A plant-based protein made from hemp seeds that has high levels of fiber and essential omega-3 and omega-6 fats. Hemp protein is low in the amino acid lysine.

Protein powders are a useful way to increase your protein intake if you're always on the go. They are convenient, portable and come in a variety of flavors.

To take protein powders, simply mix the powder with water or another liquid of your choice. Many popular supplement brands also sell ready-to-drink protein shakes.

### SUMMARY

Protein is an important nutrient that has many roles in the body. It is found naturally in foods and also available as a dietary supplement called protein powder.

### When Is the Best Time to Take Protein?

People often wonder when the best time to take their protein powder is.

This depends on your health and fitness goals. You may want to consume it at a particular time of day, depending on whether you want to lose weight, build muscle or preserve muscle.

Here are the best times to take protein based on your specific goals.

## **Losing Weight**

Protein is one of the most important nutrients for fat loss.

Eating a high-protein diet can help raise your metabolism and reduce your appetite.

Protein helps curb your appetite by reducing levels of the hunger hormone ghrelin, all while increasing levels of appetite-reducing hormones like glucagon-like peptide-1, peptide YY and cholecystokinin.

This means consuming a protein-rich snack between meals may lead you to eat fewer calories later in the day.

One study found people who ate a high-protein yogurt snack during the afternoon ate 100 fewer calories at dinner, compared to those who ate crackers or chocolate as an afternoon snack. The yogurt, crackers and chocolate all provided the same number of calories.

To reap the most weight-loss benefits, aim to eat plenty of protein-rich foods throughout the day.

### **SUMMARY**

Consuming protein-rich snacks between meals is ideal for fat loss. It may help curb hunger, which could lead you to eat fewer calories later in the day.

## **Building Muscle**

Protein is important for building muscle.

In order to build muscle and strength, you need to consume more protein than your body breaks down naturally during resistance training or weight lifting.

The best time to consume protein for optimal muscle growth is a controversial topic.

Fitness enthusiasts often recommend taking a protein supplement 15–60 minutes after exercise. This time frame is known as the “anabolic window” and said to be the perfect time for getting the most out of nutrients like protein.

However, recent research has shown that this window is much larger than previously thought.

According to the International Society of Sports Nutrition, consuming protein any time up to two hours after your workout is ideal for building muscle mass.

For the average person, resistance exercise and consuming sufficient protein are more important than timing protein intake.

That said, people training in a fasted state, like before breakfast, may benefit from taking protein shortly after a workout, as they haven't consumed protein in a while.

### **SUMMARY**

To build muscle, aim to consume protein within two hours after working out. People who train in a fasted state, like before breakfast, should ideally take protein right after working out.

## **Preventing Muscle Loss**

Maintaining muscle mass is especially important as you grow older.

Research shows that people lose roughly 3–8% of their muscle mass each decade after age 30. Sadly, losing muscle is linked to a higher risk of fractures and shorter lifespan).

Scientists recommend spreading protein intake evenly across the day to help prevent muscle loss with age. This means eating roughly 25–30 grams of protein per meal.

Most Americans eat around three times more protein at dinner than breakfast. This makes consuming more protein at breakfast an ideal way to evenly distribute protein intake.

### **SUMMARY**

To help prevent muscle loss, aim to eat 25–30 grams of protein per meal. Taking a protein supplement at meals during which you consume less protein, such as breakfast, can help spread your intake over the day.

## **Exercise Performance and Recovery**

Athletes often wonder when they should take protein for performance and recovery.

For endurance training, combining protein with a source of carbs during and after exercise may improve performance and recovery and reduce soreness.

For example, a study of 11 cyclists found that taking a protein and carb beverage during training improved recovery and reduced muscle soreness, compared to a placebo.

For resistance training, protein can help improve both performance and recovery, whether or not it's consumed with carbs.

For most people, eating enough protein is more important than timing protein intake. However, athletes partaking in resistance training can benefit from taking protein either immediately before or after a workout.

## **SUMMARY**

Endurance athletes may see improved performance and recovery from taking protein with a source of carbs during and after exercise. Resistance-training athletes can benefit from taking protein either immediately before or after a workout.

## **Should You Take Protein Before Bed?**

The elderly, as well as people looking to build muscle, increase strength and improve exercise performance and recovery, can benefit from taking protein before bed.

In a review of studies, scientists concluded that taking protein before bed is an effective strategy to promote muscle building and help them adapt to exercise.

This is because protein consumed before bed is effectively digested and absorbed, increasing the availability of protein to muscles for recovery throughout the night.

Scientists from that study recommended consuming 40 grams of protein prior to bed to maximize muscle growth and adaptation through the night.

In another study in 16 healthy elderly men, half the participants consumed casein protein before bed, while the other half consumed a placebo. The study showed consuming casein protein before bed promoted muscle growth, even in less active elderly people.

If you want to take protein before bed, you may consider taking a form of casein protein. Casein is digested slowly, which means it can provide the body with a steady supply of protein through the night.

You can also get the benefits of casein protein from real foods instead of supplements. Dairy products like cottage cheese and Greek yogurt are high in casein.

## **SUMMARY**

Taking protein before bed may be an effective strategy to help build muscle, increase strength and improve exercise performance and recovery. Elderly people looking to preserve muscle mass may also benefit from taking protein before bed.

## **Is Too Much Protein Bad for You?**

There is a common myth that consuming too much protein is bad for your health.

Some believe that consuming too much protein can damage the kidneys and liver and cause osteoporosis, a condition in which people develop hollow, porous bones.

However, these concerns are largely overblown and not supported by evidence.

In fact, far more studies show you can safely eat plenty of protein without the risk of harmful side effects.

For example, a detailed review of more than 74 studies came to the conclusion that healthy adults don't need to worry about how much protein they eat.

Most adults can benefit from consuming 0.6–0.9 grams of protein per pound (1.4–2.0 grams per kg) of body weight.

People who want to prevent muscle loss can stay on the lower end of that scale, while those wanting to lose weight or build muscle may eat at the upper end.

## **SUMMARY**

The myth that protein is bad for you is largely overblown. Plenty of evidence suggests that healthy adults can eat large amounts of protein without experiencing any harmful side effects.

## **The Bottom Line**

Protein is an incredibly versatile nutrient.

Sufficient protein intake can aid fat loss, build and preserve muscle and improve exercise performance and recovery.

What's more, taking it at the right time can further help you achieve your goals.

For example, consuming protein between meals may help curb hunger and reduce calorie intake later in the day.

Following some of the strategies above can enable you to better use protein in your everyday routine, helping you reach and maintain your health and fitness goals.

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