



## Did You Know: The Power of Protein

Did you know that your muscles, organs and immune system are all made up mostly of protein? Protein is the fuel that keeps our bodies and brains running. Ever heard the expression “running on empty?” That’s what happens when you skip a meal or forget to pack a protein-packed snack. All of the cells in your body need protein to function. When there aren’t enough amino acids from food available in the bloodstream, the body will start to break down and harvest amino acids from the muscles in order to keep more vital cells—like the ones in the brain and other organs—functioning.



When you eat a protein-dense food (such as fish, legumes, or dairy), your body begins breaking it down into smaller particles called amino acids. Once the amino acids end up in your muscles, your body starts putting them back together into your muscle tissue. This is the process your body uses to build and maintain muscle mass. [

Spreading out protein evenly during the course of a day is important. (Another bonus: Protein, like fiber, may help stave off hunger, so you’ll be less likely to reach for a bag of cookies if you have a steady supply of protein). For example, opt for a protein-packed cereal with milk in the morning. For lunch, grab a salad topped with grilled chicken breast. When hunger strikes in the afternoon, reach for a protein-packed snack like a handful of almonds or a bit of low-fat cheese. Then finish off your protein-filled day with a tasty piece of fish for dinner. Don’t forget about plant-based sources such as beans, nuts and seeds, which tend to be lower in calories and provide other beneficial nutrients your body needs.