

Increasing Your Protein Intake whilst on Haemodialysis



Why is Protein important?

Protein is an important nutrient in our bodies, helping to **build and repair** our muscles. During illness, your body needs more protein and if your protein intake is low, your body will take this protein from your muscles. It is important to keep your muscles strong to help you with daily tasks and to reduce the risk of falls.

Protein is also found in your blood. This form of protein is called **albumin**. It delivers nutrients, vitamins, minerals and energy to the rest of your body and helps to **fight infection**.

Why do I need more protein on dialysis?

People on dialysis need to eat more protein. This is because some albumin is lost during the dialysis process. It has been estimated that you can lose around 7-8g of protein during one session of haemodialysis. This means it is even more important to have protein rich foods on dialysis days.



Your blood protein (albumin) can also be lowered by infection, inflammation, or recent hospitalisation. Although these are not directly related to food, you are more likely to eat less when you are not feeling well.

Eating enough protein can help you live longer on dialysis.

Generally **1.1-1.2g protein per kg body weight** is advised per day.

Requirements can differ for those with low/high body mass index (BMI), broken skin and illness.

What are good sources of dietary protein?

Meat and fish

- ✓ Fresh is best! (lower in salt and phosphate)
- ✓ Consider sustainable fish



Dairy foods

- ✓ Milk – cow's, goat and soya milk contain 7-8g protein in every 200ml glass. Almond, hazelnut, oat and coconut milk are very low in protein
- ✓ Yoghurt – look for a yoghurt containing more than 7g protein per 100ml e.g. Skyr and Liberté
- ✓ Cheese – avoid processed cheese
- ✓ Milk puddings e.g. rice, semolina, tapioca

Vegetarian sources

- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Pulses e.g. lentils (incl. dahl), chickpeas (incl. hummus)
- ✓ Soya e.g. tofu, miso, tempeh
- ✓ Quorn
- ✓ Nuts and seeds
- ✓ Cereals and grains e.g. oats, barley, rice, quinoa

Food Labels

If you are buying a convenience meal, sandwich or snack it can be helpful to look at food labels to identify how much protein it contains. If this is a main meal it should provide at least 20g of protein, ideally more.

The protein content on food labels will help you calculate your protein intake per portion



Convenience meals such as Wiltshire Farm Foods, Oakhouse Foods or supermarket own brand can be a good option to ensure you have a main meal. It is important to look at the food label to choose meals with a higher protein content

Examples of food portions containing 30-35g of protein



1 small chicken breast



2 slices of roast meat



1 salmon steak



140g tuna



Quorn bolognese and pasta (large portion)



Omelette or frittata with cheese

Tip:

- It can be difficult for a vegetarian to get this much protein in a meal. Try combining protein sources such as eggs and cheese or vegetable protein with a large amount of pasta.

Examples of food portions containing 12-20g of protein



100g Quorn mince or pieces



80g tofu



50g cheddar



Large slice of quiche



50g meat



1 chicken kiev



Large bowl of porridge made with milk



Pot of high protein yoghurt

Tip:

- Even having a small amount of meat 50g (2oz) can give you as much as 15g of protein.
- Cereals like Cornflakes or Rice Krispies contain as little as 5g of protein. While a medium/large bowl of porridge can contain 17g protein!

Examples of food portions containing 7-9g of protein



150g baked beans



100g lentils



½ pot (100g) hummus



½ can (120g) chickpeas



250ml milk



1 large egg



2 fish fingers



½ can (100g) rice pudding



1 large meat/vegetarian
sausage (50g)



4 slices of wafer
thin ham/chicken



8 slices of chorizo



Bowl of pasta

Tip:

- Having good portions of carbohydrate such as pasta, egg noodles or quinoa can help to increase the protein content of your meal.
- It can be difficult to meet your protein needs if you only eat processed sources of meats when possible try to have fresh meat and fish.

Eating more protein on a budget

- ✓ Choose meat from the reduced section
- ✓ Choose cheaper cuts of meat such as braising steak, shin or shoulder. Slow cooking these meats gives a great tasting meal at a lower cost
- ✓ The cheapest way to buy chicken is to buy a whole chicken
- ✓ Consider replacing some of your meat in casseroles / stews with lentils and beans or add them to your current recipe to bulk it out
- ✓ Cook extra portions for your evening meal so you can have the leftovers for lunch the next day or consider freezing leftovers for another day.



High Protein Snack Ideas

- Chicken Drumstick = 20g protein
- Cheese on crackers x 2 = 10g protein
- Chicken bites = 20g protein
- Prawn snack = 11g protein
- Boiled egg = 8g protein
- Falafel and hummus = 9g protein
- Skyr yoghurt = 20g protein



Tip: Biscuits, crisps and sweets contain very little protein. Consider swapping for one of the above to help meet your protein needs.

Suggestions to Increase Your Protein Intake

2 Slices of Toast
(5g of protein)

Add



2 eggs
(20g of protein)

A bowl of Soup
(<3g of protein)

Swap



Sandwich with cheese, prawn, tuna, chicken filling (20g of protein)

Cornish pasty
(11g of protein)

Swap



Beef burger & bun
(36g of protein)

Fish fingers, mash and peas
(17g of protein)

Swap



Fillet of fish
(45g of protein)

Having a good protein source at each meal can really help you to meet your protein needs.

Nutritional Supplements

Eating enough protein can be difficult. Nutritional supplements can help in the shorter and sometimes longer term to help you meet your requirements. Your renal dietitian can advise on the prescribing of suitable supplements.

Supplements come in a range of styles and flavours and can provide up to 20g protein in a limited volume. They can be taken solely or mixed into food & drink.




Commercial Protein Products


Commercial protein products are generally **not recommended** as they can be high in potassium and/or phosphate. Speak to your Dietitian if you have a query about a particular product.

Final Tips



- Try to have a good protein source at every meal
- Always have a high-protein snack like tuna, cheese on crackers or a yoghurt on hand
- Try to get into the habit of checking food labels to help you choose products with the most protein
- Consider a protein supplement if you are unable to increase your dietary protein intake
- Take your phosphate binders as directed. Where there is protein there may also be phosphate!
- Your albumin is lowered when you have too much fluid, so always keep within your recommended fluid allowance

 **Note on Phosphate:** If you have difficulty controlling your phosphate on phosphate binders then it is advised you keep within your dairy and egg allowances and avoid processed meat where possible. Speak to your Dietitian if you have any concerns.

 **Note on Potassium:** If you have difficulty controlling your potassium then speak to your Dietitian regarding the most appropriate protein choices.

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Your Action Plan/Notes: