

Need more energy? NOT more protein!

By Tracy Higgs, BHK, RNCP

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As a nutritionist the most common complaint we hear is for a lack of daily energy. As a nutritionist the most common question we are asked is, “Am I getting enough protein and what about the Atkins diet?” The truth is, if additional energy is what you are seeking, more protein is likely the last place you should investigate.

The first sources most people think of when it comes to protein are animal meats. This includes beef, chicken, turkey, pork and fish. What we often forget about or are not aware that protein is actually available in plant foods as well particularly beans, lentils and grains.

When the body’s digestive system is working properly, protein is broken down into tiny building blocks called amino acids. These amino acids are used for building, maintaining and repairing the body’s tissues. Not for energy! It is true that protein helps to stabilize blood sugar but it is not the bodies preferred source of energy. Complex carbohydrates and fats are. Adding more protein to the typical North American diet only means stressing the digestive system more and hence requiring more energy to break it down. This energy could be used for performance or to at least stay awake. An unbalanced amount of protein can also dehydrate you and put unnecessary stress on the kidneys.

So if you are lacking in the energy department, try eating more live foods, like fresh fruits, vegetables, sprouts and herbs. These foods provide the body with a vital energy and digestive enzymes as well as carbohydrates. Also, having a small amount of animal protein with each meal (instead of it being the main component) or try some plant sources like beans, lentils and unprocessed grains.