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6 Signs You May Not Be Getting Enough Protein



There is a lot of nutritional emphasis on getting in the right amount of fruits and vegetables, but many people also may not be getting enough of other food groups as well, especially something like protein. As a result, our body may be showing signs that you aren't getting enough protein, and this could happen to anyone not ingesting enough of the nutrient, whether you're a vegetarian, a picky eater, or more of a fan of other food groups. Experts recommend getting between 46 and 56 grams of protein a day, and if you're not eating the right foods, it can be easy to fall below this.

"Protein is a macronutrient, made up of amino acids that work as building blocks in our bodies making all our new cells, including immune cells and hormones," says **Certified Nutritionist Franci Cohen** to Bustle over email. "Protein digests more slowly than carbohydrates, so it helps to release energy into your bloodstream gradually, keeping you going longer."

To increase the amount of protein you're consuming, you don't necessarily have to just eat animal products. Experts recommend protein powder, Greek yogurt, eggs, and snacks such as nuts. If you think you may not be consuming enough of the nutrient, look out for these six signs you aren't getting enough protein.

1. You're Craving Sweets



"Protein is very satisfying and helps keep our blood sugar steady throughout the day," says Erinn Gregory, RDN over email. If your blood sugar is unstable, causing you to feel ups and downs of energy, you may need to increase your protein intake.

2. Your Brain Is Foggy

"Without enough protein, blood sugar levels plummet, and leave us feeling tired and distracted," says Gregory. Protein is also responsible for the chemical messaging in your brain, helping you to stay focused and alert.

3. Your Muscles Are Weak



If carrying your groceries from your car to your refrigerator feels like a challenge, your diet may be to blame. "When you don't eat enough protein, the body will start to break down stored proteins in the form of muscle and other tissues," says Cohen. "This can shrink your muscle mass and diminish your strength gains, making workouts and everyday physical activities more challenging."

4. Your Hair Is Falling Out



Protein plays a big role in hair growth and helps keep follicles on your head strong. "If your hair is falling out a lot even without the normal tug and pull with brushing and everyday life, check your diet," says Gregory.

5. You're Frequently Tired

"I'm not talking about feeling groggy when you wake up," says Cohen. "I mean wanting to take a nap in the middle of the day or evening when you never used to. And it doesn't have to be just physical — a mental lack of motivation is also sometimes associated with protein deficiency."

6. You're Always Hungry

"Protein helps to satiate your appetite, both in the moment and in the hours that follow your meal or snack," says Amy Margulies, RD of Retrofit over email. Studies have shown that eating protein first thing in the morning can also help you consume less food throughout the day.



If you recognize any of these signs, consider checking with your doctor, or be sure to load up on healthy sources of protein throughout the day to keep your levels in check.