

## Kidney Disease: How to Get the Right Amount of Protein

Your body needs protein to help build and repair muscle, skin, and other body tissues. Protein also helps fight infection, balance body fluids, and carry oxygen through the body. However, people with kidney disease often have special protein needs.

- You may need to eat a low-protein diet.
- If you are on dialysis, you may need to eat a little more protein.

Your doctor or dietitian can help you figure out how much protein you need each day. This will depend on your weight, the health of your kidneys, and whether you are on dialysis.

### What happens if you get too much protein?

Eating more protein than your body can handle can make you very sick.

When protein breaks down in your body, it forms waste products, including urea. Healthy kidneys can clear urea out of the body. When you have kidney disease, the kidneys have trouble getting rid of waste products. These waste products can build up in your blood and cause serious health problems.

Limiting protein may:

- Reduce symptoms of kidney disease.
- Help your kidneys stay healthier longer.

### What happens if you do not get enough protein?

Eating too much protein can stress the kidneys, but you need to eat enough to stay as strong and healthy as you can. If your diet is too low in protein:



- You may start to have trouble avoiding infections and illnesses.
- You may feel tired and not have a lot of energy.
- You may feel weak or lose muscle strength.

This is called malnutrition. It is very serious in any person with kidney disease.

Work with your doctor and a dietitian to make an eating plan that balances your need for less protein with enough protein to stay healthy.

### What are the best sources of protein?

Some sources of protein are easier for the body to use than others. Try to get most of your protein from these sources so that you

limit the urea in your blood and reduce the strain on your kidneys.

**High-quality, healthy proteins:**

- Low-fat meats
- Fish
- Chicken and other poultry
- Eggs, especially the white part

- Milk and milk products. However, because you may need to limit the fluids in your diet, milk may not be the best source of protein for you. If you do drink milk, be sure to count it as part of your daily fluids.

**Do you have any questions or concerns after reading this information?** It's a good idea to write them down and take them to your next doctor visit.



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