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Two Muscle-Boosting Super Foods

By Dr. Mercola | November 6th, 2017

Proteins are found in every cell in your body. These chains of amino acids are important for repair, maintenance and growth of cells, and are essential for healthy muscles, organs, glands and skin. As protein is broken down and used up in your body, you must replace it by consuming protein via your diet. There's no question that eating enough high-quality protein is essential to good health, but many Americans tend to eat far more than they need.

Excessive protein can have a stimulating effect on a biochemical pathway called the mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR). This pathway has an important and significant role in many cancers. When you reduce protein to just what your body needs, mTOR remains inhibited, which helps minimize your chances of cancer growth.

So, remember, there appears to be a Goldilocks' Zone when it comes to protein. You want just enough — not too much and not too little — and your individual requirement will vary depending on your age, sex, physical activity and more. As a general rule, most people likely need about one-half gram of protein per pound of LEAN body mass. To calculate your lean body mass, simply subtract your percent body fat from 100, then multiply that percentage by your current weight.

Next, multiply your lean body mass by 0.5 to get your approximate protein requirement in grams. Seniors, pregnant women and athletes generally need about 25 percent more than the general population. When it comes to protein-rich, muscle-boosting foods, quality also matters. Two of the top contenders here are:

1. Grass fed beef. Compared to conventional beef from animals raised in concentrated animal feeding operations, grass fed beef tends to have significantly better omega-6 to omega-3 ratios, higher concentrations of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and antioxidants, and a lower risk of being contaminated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

When buying meat, be sure to look for the American Grassfed Association's certification mark. At present, this is the only logo able to guarantee the meat comes from animals that have been fed a 100 percent forage diet, never been confined to a feedlot, never received antibiotics or hormones, and have been raised on an American farm (i.e., the meat is not imported).

2. Whey protein, a byproduct of milk and cheese (often referred to as the gold standard of protein), was promoted for its health benefits by Hippocrates as early as 420 B.C. Besides providing all of the essential amino acids your body needs, high-quality whey protein from organically raised grass fed cows also contains three ingredients of particular importance for health: leucine, glutathione and CLA.

Both leucine and CLA can be helpful if you're trying to lose weight, while glutathione boosts your overall health by protecting your cells and mitochondria from oxidative and peroxidative damage. As with beef, make sure your whey protein is certified organic and derived from grass fed cows, and is minimally processed with no added sugars and preservatives.

Three Anticancer Foods to Eat More Of

Many previously mentioned foods also belong in this section as well. Three additional foods with potent

chemoprotective activity that many don't eat enough of are:

1. Broccoli (and other cruciferous vegetables). Broccoli has definitely earned its place among chemoprotective foods, thanks to plant compounds such as sulforaphane, glucoraphanin, phenolic compounds and diindolylmethane (DIM). Studies have shown sulforaphane causes apoptosis (programmed cell death) in colon, prostate, breast and tobacco-induced lung cancer cells.

Three servings of broccoli per week may reduce your risk of prostate cancer by more than 60 percent. It's also an anti-inflammatory, and encourages production of enzymes capable of reducing reactive oxygen species by as much as 73 percent.

Glucoraphanin also influences the process of carcinogenesis and mutagenesis, while phenolic compounds have a potent ability to eliminate damaging free radicals and quell inflammation. DIM also has multiple potential benefits, including boosting your immune system and helping to prevent or treat cancer.

To really optimize these benefits, be sure to eat your cruciferous veggies with some organic mustard seed powder. If you don't like broccoli, keep in mind that many, if not most, of the members of the cruciferous family have similar plant compounds and health benefits.

2. Leeks, an allium vegetable closely related to onions and garlic, have much to offer in the way of good health. Like garlic, many of its therapeutic effects come from its sulfur-containing compounds, such as allicin. Leeks also contain kaempferol, a natural flavonol also found in broccoli, kale and cabbage, which research has linked to a lower risk of cancer.

3. Black cumin, also known as black seed (*Nigella Sativa*), has at least 20 different pharmacological actions, including natural antibacterial properties, antioxidant, renal protective and gastro-protective properties. Some have even called it a "seed of blessing" because it provides protection against both heart disease and cancer.