

Shape Up For Summer With Protein-rich Dairy

April 9 2022 7:15 AM



ST. LOUIS - Summer is only a few months away! As warmer weather rolls in, it may be time to decide to dust off those January resolutions to lose weight, get active, or shape up for the summer months. Figuring out how to start can be a challenge. “Here’s a quick tip,” states St. Louis District Dairy Council registered dietitian Maggie Cimarolli, “start with protein-rich dairy foods.”

Why is protein important?

Protein is a vital part of a balanced eating plan important for staying strong and healthy. When it comes to fitness, protein is the star of the show, and for good reason. Protein digests slowly, so it promotes a feeling of fullness when part of meals and snacks.

Research suggests that a high-protein breakfast can help reduce evening snacking, as the satiety effect may last all day. Luckily, dairy provides a widely accessible source of protein. “Including milk, yogurt, or cheese with every meal may help reduce overall calorie intake by warding off those between-meal munchies,” states Cimarolli.

What is protein?

Protein serves as the foundation or building blocks of the body. Along with providing structure, it plays a role in functions like muscle maintenance, immune system response, and skin repair. Dairy foods provide a specific type of protein known as a complete protein. Complete proteins contain all nine essential amino acids the body can only get from food. With these nine essential amino acids and additional vitamins and minerals, dairy foods are full of powerful nutrients.

How much protein is needed in a healthy diet?

Protein needs are based on an individual’s height, weight, and physical activity level. Adult women on average need 45 grams, while men need closer to 55 grams. Getting the recommended three servings of dairy can help meet those needs. “An 8-ounce glass of milk provides 8 grams of protein. Other dairy foods like Greek yogurt can provide up to 20 grams of protein. Looking at the package label will show the protein content, along with the additional essential nutrients dairy foods offer,” states Cimarolli.

Why is protein important for exercise?

Protein helps the body recover from workouts and exercise. Exercise-induced muscle damage is difficult to avoid, but easy to help repair with post-workout protein. Studies show that low fat or fat-free chocolate milk is an excellent choice to replenish depleted muscles. Additionally, chocolate milk contains electrolytes needed for rehydration. It also provides calcium and vitamin D to help maintain strong bones. Chocolate milk is a convenient and affordable refuel option after hitting the gym, field or the pavement.

Starting and maintaining a fitness plan can be a challenge, but getting the daily-recommended dose of protein does not have to be. Dairy foods offer high-quality protein, and the variety makes them an easy addition to meals and snack. For example, adding cheese to vegetables, making oatmeal or cereals with milk, or using yogurt for dips and sauces is a great way to ensure a diet filled with a good source of protein.



Peanut Butter Banana Breakfast Shake

Fuel your day with this protein-packed shake, great for breakfast or recovery after a tough workout! With 15 grams of protein and 13 essential nutrients, this smoothie is going to bring energy into your day!

Makes 1 Servings

Prep Time: 5 min

Cook Time: 5 min

Ingredients

1 cup milk

½ cup Greek yogurt

1 large banana sliced and frozen

2 Tbsp. peanut butter

1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Ice optional

Optional mix-ins: 1 Tbsp. flaxseed meal, 1 Tbsp. chia seeds, or cocoa powder to taste

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth and creamy. Pour into a tall glass and garnish with a sprinkle of cocoa powder, if desired.

For additional information on the protein in dairy, or to request a “Peak Performance with Dairy” brochure, visit www.stldairycouncil.org, call St. Louis District Dairy Council at (314) 835-9668 or e-mail MCimarolli@stldairycouncil.org. For easy and tasty recipes, check us out on Facebook and Instagram at STLDairyCouncil.