

High Protein Diets

High Protein Diets often restrict healthful foods that provide essential nutrients and don't provide the variety of foods needed to adequately meet nutritional needs. People who stay on these diets very long may not get enough vitamins and minerals and face other potential health risks.



Many Americans follow popular diets, such as the Zone, Protein Power, Sugar Busters and Stillman diets. Most of these diets aren't balanced in terms of the essential nutrients our bodies need. Some are high protein and emphasize foods like meat, eggs and cheese, which are rich in protein and saturated fat. Some restrict important carbohydrates such as cereals, grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. If followed for a long time, they can result in potential health problems. And while they may result in quick weight loss, more research is needed on their effectiveness for long-term weight loss.

These diets can cause a quick drop in weight because eliminating carbohydrates causes a loss of body fluids. Lowering carbohydrate intake also prevents the body from completely burning fat. In the diets that are also high in protein, substances called ketones are formed and released into the bloodstream, a condition called ketosis. It makes dieting easier because it lowers appetite and may cause nausea.

But these diets have other effects besides inducing quick weight loss. Most Americans already eat more protein than their bodies need. And eating too much protein can increase health risks. High-protein animal foods are usually also high in saturated fat. Eating large amounts of high-fat foods for a sustained period raises the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke and several types of cancer. People who can't use excess protein effectively may be at higher risk of kidney and liver disorders, and osteoporosis.

High-protein diets don't provide some essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutritional elements. A high-carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure. Thus, limiting these foods may raise blood pressure by reducing the intake of calcium, potassium and magnesium while simultaneously increasing sodium intake.

The best way to lose weight is through a healthy diet that includes a variety of foods and is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables along with regular physical activity can help most people manage and maintain weight loss for both cardiovascular health and appearance.