

The Protein Signals Plan

For anyone eating roughly the way they always have and noticing their body answering differently. Every line below restates a claim verified against Tier-1 medical sources. Nothing here is invented, and nothing is for sale.

✓ CHECKED AGAINST CLEVELAND CLINIC · HARVARD HEALTH PUBLISHING

1

True deficiency is rare here

Protein deficiencies are rare among people who live in the U.S., and are mostly tied to inadequate overall food intake. Falling short of a target is a different thing. (Cleveland Clinic)

2

The signals arrive in clusters

There is not just one symptom that points to low protein. You will more than likely experience several at once. (Cleveland Clinic)

3

Start at 0.8 to 1 g per kg

The most common recommendation is 0.8 to 1 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight each day, and older adults can benefit from more. (Cleveland Clinic)

1. Work out the number you are actually aiming at

Most people have never once calculated this.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cleveland Clinic gives the arithmetic directly: divide your weight in pounds by 2.205 to get kilograms, then multiply by 0.8. That is the starting floor. Cleveland Clinic also notes that older adults can benefit from more protein to help counteract muscle loss, and Harvard Health reports that supplementing protein alongside heavy resistance exercise produces the most improvement in muscle mass and strength in healthy older adults.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC AND HARVARD HEALTH PUBLISHING

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Do the two-step calculation once and write the number down
- ☐ Note that this is a floor, not a ceiling
- ☐ If you have kidney disease, set the number with your provider instead

2. Look for the cluster, not a single sign

One symptom on its own usually means something else.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cleveland Clinic lists the recognised signs of low protein: swelling, stunted growth in children, a weakened immune system, muscle loss, bone fractures, skin and hair changes, weight gain or loss, and anemia. It is explicit that no single one of these is diagnostic. Its dietitian notes that swelling in particular has many possible causes, and that if swelling is your only symptom it is not necessarily about protein.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Write down which signs you have noticed and for how long
- ☐ Count how many appear together rather than focusing on one
- ☐ Take the list to your provider rather than self-diagnosing from it

3. Spread protein across the day instead of stacking it at dinner

This costs nothing and it is where most gaps close.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cleveland Clinic's dietitian advises against trying to cram all your protein into one meal and recommends including protein at every meal, because getting protein at every meal

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Add a protein source to breakfast for two weeks
- ☐ Check that no single meal is carrying the whole daily total
- ☐ Run this before you buy anything

makes it easier to hit your total by the end of the day. For most people the shortfall sits in the first two-thirds of the day, not at dinner.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC

4. Fix it with food first, and use powder only for the gap

The order matters more than the product.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cleveland Clinic is direct about the hierarchy: getting whole food sources of protein is best, but if it is the difference between meeting your protein needs and not meeting them, that is where shakes and bars can help fill in the gaps. It also notes that quality matters alongside quantity, since complete proteins carry all nine essential amino acids while many plant sources do not.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Try two higher-protein whole-food swaps first, such as Greek yogurt or eggs
- ☐ Only add a powder for the gap that food did not close
- ☐ Vary plant protein sources if you eat mostly plants

5. Know when this stops being a diet question

Some of these signs belong to a provider, not a shopping list.

WHY THIS WORKS

Cleveland Clinic advises talking with a healthcare provider if a change in appetite is affecting your desire to eat, and notes that low protein can show up on bloodwork as hypoproteinemia. It also cautions the other direction: if you are living with kidney disease, your provider may recommend keeping protein intake on the lower end, because clearing excess protein puts more work on compromised kidneys.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC

DO THIS WEEK

- ☐ Raise appetite changes with your provider rather than waiting them out
- ☐ Ask whether bloodwork is worth doing if several signs cluster
- ☐ Confirm your target with your provider if you have kidney disease

EVERY CLAIM ABOVE, TRACED TO ITS SOURCE

Cleveland Clinic, 8 Symptoms of Protein Deficiency · <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/protein-deficiency-symptoms>

Cleveland Clinic, How Much Protein Do You Need? And How To Get It · <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-much-protein-you-need>

Harvard Health Publishing, Muscle loss and protein needs in older adults · <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/muscle-loss-and-protein-needs-in-older-adults>

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