How Much PROTEIN is Enough to Protect Muscle in Perimenopause? Transcript

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Why Standard Protein Advice Fails Women

If you've been consuming the If you've been consuming the amount of protein you amount of protein you consider healthy consider healthy but are still but are still losing muscle losing muscle mass during mass during menopause, menopause, menopause, you're probably just not eating you're probably just not eating enough, and it's not enough, and it's not your fault.

your fault. The recommendations The recommendations most doctors refer to most doctors refer to were never were never designed for designed for perimenopausal or perimenopausal or menopausal women. Today I'm menopausal women. Today I'm going to show you what the research actually says. Hi, research actually says. Hi, I'm Dr. Elizabeth I'm Dr. Elizabeth Tatakin, a naturopathic doctor from Arizona.

naturopathic doctor from Arizona. I work with women I work with women during perimenopause, menopause, and the, menopause, and the hormonal changes that hormonal changes that accompany them. In accompany them. In my practice, my practice, insufficient insufficient insufficient protein intake is protein intake is one of the one of the most common and most common and most correctable most correctable causes of muscle loss causes of muscle loss I see in perimenopausal women. By the end of this video,. By the end of this video, you'll learn you'll learn how much protein your body actually needs at your body actually needs at this stage, why this stage, why standard advice doesn't standard advice doesn't work, and what one work, and what one dietary change dietary change will yield the biggest will yield the biggest results. We'll results. We'll look at how look at how menopause affects menopause affects muscles, why old muscles, why old recommendations don't recommendations don't work here, what work here, what amount to aim for, and amount to aim for, and how to achieve it with the how to achieve it with the help of familiar help of familiar foods. Let's start with what's foods.

What Menopause Does to Muscle

Let's start with what's actually actually actually happening in happening in your body. Because it's physiology, not a, not a willpower problem. Estrogen willpower problem. Estrogen does more than does more than just regulate your just regulate your cycle. It helps cycle. It helps muscle tissue muscle tissue respond to respond to consumed protein. Therefore, consumed protein. Therefore, when when when estrogen levels begin to estrogen levels begin to drop in drop in perimenopause, your perimenopause, your muscles become less muscles become less efficient at efficient at using protein using protein for growth and for growth and repair. The same repair. The same portion of food that was portion of food that was effective at 35 is effective at 35 is much less effective at 48.

much less effective at 48. There's a name for this. This There's a name for this. This is called is called is called anabolic anabolic anabolic resistance. Your resistance. Your muscles haven't muscles haven't disappeared. They still disappeared. They still want to grow. But want to grow. But the signal that encourages the signal that encourages them to grow has become them to grow has become weaker. Therefore, weaker. Therefore, more more more protein is needed to get the protein is needed to get the same result.

same result. And this happens over And this happens over time. Women time. Women lose 3 to 8% of their muscle mass muscle mass every decade, every decade, starting at age 30. And starting at age 30. And this pace this pace accelerates after accelerates after menopause. This is what it menopause. This is what it looks like in the mirror.

looks like in the mirror. The weight on the scales may remain The weight on the scales may remain almost unchanged, almost unchanged, but body composition but body composition changes. Less changes. Less muscle, more fat, muscle, more fat, especially in the waist area. You feel. You feel weaker and less weaker and less fit, even though fit, even though the number on the scale hasn't the number on the scale hasn't changed. I want to changed. I want to clarify something. This is not clarify something. This is not inevitable, and it is not inevitable, and it is not forever. But this forever. But this means that the amount of means that the amount of protein that was previously protein that was previously sufficient is now sufficient is now insufficient. This is what insufficient. This is

what muscles are all about. This muscles are all about. This explains why protein is more explains why protein is more important for important for you now than it was 10 years ago.

But here's where it gets But here's where it gets interesting, because interesting, because the recommendations that the recommendations that most people follow most people follow never never never took this took this situation into account. So, here's the situation into account.

The Gap in the RDA Guideline

So, here's the gap between gap between recommendations and recommendations and reality. The figure that reality. The figure that almost everyone almost everyone refers to refers to comes from the comes from the recommended recommended recommended daily allowance of daily allowance of protein. This is protein. This is 0.8 grams per kilogram of 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight per day. Here's what body weight per day. Here's what most most most women are never women are never told. This figure was told. This figure was set as the set as the minimum necessary minimum necessary to prevent to prevent deficiency in the adult deficiency in the adult population. It population. It was never was never optimal for a optimal for a menopausal woman menopausal woman trying to trying to preserve muscle. This is a preserve muscle. This is a threshold, not a threshold, not a target. And target. And the research on the research on this group is quite this group is quite clear. In 2025, a clear. In 2025, a randomized randomized randomized control control control trial trial trial followed 126 followed 126 postmenopausal women postmenopausal women who were who were already losing muscle already losing muscle mass. One group mass. One group consumed the standard consumed the standard 0.8 grams per kilogram. The other 0.8 grams per kilogram. The other consumed 1.2 g. After consumed 1.2 g. After 12 weeks, the group with the 12 weeks, the group with the higher protein intake higher protein intake showed showed significant improvements in significant improvements in muscle mass, muscle mass, grip strength, and grip strength, and knee function. Same women, same knee function. Same women, same age, more age, more protein—better protein—better protein—better results. This results. This is confirmed in the is confirmed in the long long long term.

term. term. A study of A study of postmenopausal women aged postmenopausal women aged 60 to 90 60 to 90 found that those who found that those who consumed more than the consumed more than the recommended amount had a stronger recommended amount had a stronger grip and walked faster grip and walked faster than those who than those who consumed the recommended amount consumed the recommended amount or less. It's not just about how or less. It's not just about how you you you look. It's about look. It's about staying staying staying strong and mobile as you strong and mobile as you age. And this is age. And this is not just evidenced by not just evidenced by isolated isolated isolated studies. The studies. The European Medical European Medical Group, which sets Group, which sets guidelines for guidelines for bone and bone and muscle health in muscle health in postmenopausal women, postmenopausal women, advises 1.2 grams per advises 1.2 grams per kilogram per day. This is kilogram per day. This is 25–50% more than the 25–50% more than the standard norm for standard norm for adults. So, the adults. So, the standard advice is standard advice is underestimating you. The underestimating you. The next question is next question is obvious. What number obvious.

The Protein Target for Women Over 40

What number should be your should be your realistic goal? For realistic goal? For most active most active women in women in perimenopause and perimenopause and menopause, the goal is 1.2.

menopause, the goal is 1.2. 1.2 to 1.6 grams of 1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. body weight per day.

Let me explain Let me explain more specifically, because more specifically, because grams per kilogram are grams per kilogram are not something we not something we think about over breakfast.

If you weigh If you weigh around 150 pounds (68 around 150 pounds (68 kg), that's about 82–109 kg), that's about 82–109 grams of protein per day. grams of protein per day.

When I track this with When I track this with women in my women in my practice, most practice, most consume

somewhere around 50–60 consume somewhere around 50–60 grams. So we grams. So we are not talking about are not talking about minor changes. For minor changes. For many women, this is many women, this is almost doubling what almost doubling what they eat now.

But the total But the total number is only number is only half the story. How you half the story. How you distribute it distribute it throughout the day is just as throughout the day is just as important. That's important. That's why. Your body why. Your body can only absorb a can only absorb a certain amount of muscle-building protein at a time.

muscle-building protein at a time. Therefore, one large Therefore, one large serving for dinner will not serving for dinner will not compensate for compensate for compensate for the lack of protein the lack of protein in the morning and afternoon. 80 in the morning and afternoon. 80 grams in the evening won't grams in the evening won't save the rest of the day.

The solution is in distribution. The solution is in distribution. Try Try Try to consume at least to consume at least 20–30 grams of protein at 20–30 grams of protein at each each each main main main meal: breakfast, lunch, meal: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And this is where and dinner. And this is where most women have the most women have the biggest biggest biggest gap. We tend gap. We tend to eat most of our to eat most of our calories early in calories early in the day and leave protein the day and leave protein for later. A light for later. A light breakfast, a small breakfast, a small lunch, and then the bulk of your lunch, and then the bulk of your daily daily daily protein intake at protein intake at dinner. Changing this dinner. Changing this routine, especially a routine, especially a more substantial breakfast, more substantial breakfast, is often the is often the key factor that key factor that produces results. And one more produces results.

Why Distribution Matters More Than Total

And one more point: the quality of point: the quality of protein matters. protein matters. Animal proteins Animal proteins contain the complete set of contain the complete set of building blocks building blocks your your your muscles need. Plant muscles need. Plant proteins can proteins can help too, but help too, but require a little require a little more planning more planning to get a full to get a full spectrum of amino acids.

spectrum of amino acids. Additionally, portions Additionally, portions should usually be should usually be larger. Numbers are larger. Numbers are one thing. Reaching the norm one thing. Reaching the norm without eating chicken every time is different, and it's easier than you think. Here's the than you think.

Pairing Protein With Resistance Training

Here's the element that makes element that makes everything we've discussed everything we've discussed work for you more work for you more effectively. Protein and effectively. Protein and strength training are not an “either-or” choice.

This is a couple. Think This is a couple. Think about it this way. Protein is a about it this way. Protein is a building material. Strength training is a construction is a construction crew that crew that comes in and comes in and uses this uses this material. Eating material. Eating protein without training protein without training gives your body gives your body the materials, but there's no one to the materials, but there's no one to use them for.

use them for. Training without Training without enough enough enough protein is like a team protein is like a team on the field without on the field without supplies. You supplies. You need both.

need both. Studies Studies Studies confirm confirm confirm the effectiveness of this the effectiveness of this combination. A combination. A 2019 randomized trial in postmenopausal women postmenopausal women found that found that adding protein to adding protein to strength training strength training improved daily improved daily functioning.

functioning. functioning. For example, it becomes easier For example, it becomes easier to get up from a chair to get up from a chair or walk, and or walk, and endurance increases, even endurance increases, even if the increase

in if the increase in muscle mass was muscle mass was moderate. In other moderate. In other words, you become words, you become stronger and more stronger and more capable in capable in everyday life, everyday life, and that is the main and that is the main goal. And here's the good goal. And here's the good news. You don't news. You don't need heavy need heavy weights or a weights or a gym membership; resistance bands, gym membership; resistance bands, bodyweight squats bodyweight squats, light dumbbells —any —any —any stable resistance counts stable resistance counts. It is important that. It is important that you regularly you regularly force your muscles force your muscles to overcome some resistance. A practical start is practical start is two workouts per two workouts per week. This is week. This is enough to start enough to start seeing results. You will seeing results. You will be able to progress be able to progress further when it becomes further when it becomes part of your part of your routine. A short routine. A short pause. If these facts pause. If these facts help you help you put together a complete put together a complete picture, be sure to picture, be sure to subscribe. This subscribe. This channel covers topics in channel covers topics in naturopathic and naturopathic and functional functional functional medicine, including medicine, including women's and women's and family health. I am currently family health. I am currently delving into delving into the topics of perimenopause the topics of perimenopause and menopause. You and menopause. You definitely don't want to definitely don't want to miss out on new miss out on new content. I also content. I also want to hear from you.

want to hear from you. Leave a comment and Leave a comment and tell us how much tell us how much protein you usually protein you usually consume during the consume during the day. I read all day. I read all the comments and it the comments and it helps me helps me understand what you understand what you need next.

need next. Let's get to the Let's get to the specifics. You don't specifics.

Practical Ways to Hit Your Number

You don't need to drastically need to drastically change your entire change your entire life. You need life. You need protein, which you see protein, which you see in every meal. Start with the basics.

. Start with the basics. For example, for For example, for breakfast, eat eggs breakfast, eat eggs and, say, a bowl of and, say, a bowl of Greek yogurt— that'll give you about that'll give you about 25 grams without even 25 grams without even thinking about it. For lunch thinking about it. For lunch and dinner, build your and dinner, build your plate plate plate around around around protein. It could be protein. It could be fish, chicken, beans fish, chicken, beans or lentils.

or lentils. Keep Keep Keep simple simple simple snack options on hand, such as snack options on hand, such as cottage cheese. cottage cheese. Here are some numbers to Here are some numbers to remember.

remember. remember. A cup of Greek A cup of Greek yogurt provides yogurt provides about 15–20 grams. Half a about 15–20 grams. Half a cup of cottage cheese provides about 14 cup of cottage cheese provides about 14 grams. One egg provides about six about six grams. A can of salmon —about 20–25 g. A —about 20–25 g. A cup of edamame— about 17 g. These are your about 17 g. These are your easy wins, and you easy wins, and you can can can combine them. If you combine them. If you prefer prefer prefer plant-based foods, you plant-based foods, you may well may well reach the norm. Tofu, reach the norm. Tofu, tempeh, lentils, and tempeh, lentils, and edamame are all edamame are all suitable. Portions are suitable. Portions are just usually just usually larger, so a little larger, so a little planning will help.

planning will help. There is another tool There is another tool that I use that I use myself and constantly myself and constantly recommend to patients. This is an. This is an essential essential essential amino acid powder. I choose amino acid powder. I choose Perfect Amino from Body Health.

Perfect Amino from Body Health. Amino acids are the Amino acids are the building blocks from building blocks from which your body which your body builds muscle. This builds muscle. This powder contains all powder contains all nine essential nine essential amino acids in a form amino acids in a form that is almost completely that is almost completely digestible and digestible and contains almost no calories.

One scoop provides One scoop provides about 5 g of about 5 g of essential essential essential amino acids. amino acids. Because the body Because the body uses them very uses them very efficiently, this is efficiently, this is comparable to the comparable to the digestible protein in a digestible protein in a much larger much larger serving of whey serving of whey protein. I'm not counting protein. I'm not counting it gram for gram against it gram for gram against your food allowance.

your food allowance. I use this as a I use this as a daily support, an daily support, an easy way to give my easy way to give my body the basics, body the basics, especially on busy especially on busy mornings when a mornings when a full protein full protein breakfast doesn't work.

breakfast doesn't work. If you change only If you change only one thing after watching this one thing after watching this video, make it video, make it breakfast. For breakfast. For most women, this is the most women, this is the meal with meal with the lowest the lowest protein content and the easiest to protein content and the easiest to fix.

fix. fix. Try to see Try to see protein on your plate protein on your plate before you add before you add carbs or fats. This is a carbs or fats. This is a practical approach.

practical approach. Let me Let me Let me summarize everything that summarize everything that has been said. Here's what I want you to take away from you to take away from this. Your body this. Your body won't let you down. It won't let you down. It does exactly what does exactly what biology predicts biology predicts when it lowers when it lowers estrogen levels. Losing estrogen levels. Losing muscle is not a sentence.

muscle is not a sentence. This largely This largely depends on what depends on what you consume, and that you consume, and that can be changed. Three can be changed. Three things to things to remember. Firstly, the remember. Firstly, the standard 0.8 g per standard 0.8 g per kilogram of weight is kilogram of weight is not enough for you.

not enough for you. Instead, Instead, Instead, aim for 1.2–1.6 aim for 1.2–1.6 g. Second, g. Second, spread it out spread it out over at least 20–30 over at least 20–30 grams at each grams at each meal, rather than meal, rather than eating it all at eating it all at once for dinner.

Third, add strength Third, add strength training twice a training twice a week. That's when the week. That's when the protein you consume protein you consume really starts really starts working. And working. And consider all this more consider all this more broadly, because protein does not broadly, because protein does not work in isolation from work in isolation from everything else. Your everything else. Your muscles depend on muscles depend on how you sleep, how you how you sleep, how you manage stress, how you manage stress, how you move, and the move, and the quality of the food that quality of the food that supplements that protein. In supplements that protein. In naturopathy, we naturopathy, we talk about talk about removing obstacles removing obstacles to healing and then giving the giving the body what body what it needs to it needs to function. Insufficient function. Insufficient protein intake is one of the one of the most common most common most common obstacles I see obstacles I see at this stage of a at this stage of a woman's life, and it's the easiest to woman's life, and it's the easiest to fix. Your fix. Your body knows how to body knows how to heal itself. My heal itself. My job is to help job is to help remove what stands remove what stands in the way. If you're in the way. If you're interested in creatine, interested in creatine, another supplement that another supplement that has some interesting has some interesting research for research for women over 40, women over 40, including on " including on " brain fog" and sleep, I brain fog" and sleep, I made a separate video about it made a separate video about it. I'll leave. I'll leave the link right here.

the link right here. And if you want to start And if you want to start today, today, start with breakfast. start with breakfast. Add protein to it Add protein to it before eating before eating anything else. It is with this anything else. It is with this change that most change that most women feel the women feel the difference first.

If you need If you need honest and honest and informed informed informed information about information about perimenopause and perimenopause and what's really what's really happening to your happening to your body, this is the channel body, this is the channel for it. Subscribe for it. Subscribe and take care of yourself.

and take care of yourself. See you in the See you in the