

Protein

Nuts and Dairy

Today, I want to discuss something we talk about a great deal in the office: PROTEIN



First let's discuss why protein is important and then what types of protein are best. The reason we emphasize protein is because it helps patients lose weight safely. If you don't get enough protein, your body will start breaking down muscle to get the protein it needs. As long as you get enough protein, your body will preserve muscle and instead will break down fat (this is a bit of a simplification, but it is the general idea). This is what we want, for your body to break down fat and preserve muscle. This is "healthy" weight loss. When your body starts breaking down muscle, then that is "unhealthy" weight loss, when patients don't look well. So the main reason we want all of our patients to get enough protein is to make sure they lose weight in a healthy manner. Now that we know why protein is important, let's talk about the best protein sources and also which ones to avoid.

After surgery the most important protein source is your liquid protein supplement. If you aren't sure about the one you are using, bring it into your surgeon's office and ask if it is good or not. After the liquid supplement, good food sources would be egg whites (not whole eggs, but egg whites), most fish, beans, and lean meats. A lean meat is one that is 90% lean, by the way. Tofu is also a good protein source, but many patients don't find it very appetizing. If you are one of those rare people who actually likes tofu, well, lucky you! It is a good source of protein.

What you will notice about most of the protein sources I mentioned is that the protein levels are high, but the calories are low. That is what we are looking for: high protein, low calories. So what about nuts and dairy?

Let's discuss nuts first. Nuts are high in protein, but also high in calories. Not

DID YOU KNOW ?

- Tofu is made from soybeans, water, and a curdling agent.
- Tofu is high in protein and calcium.
- Tofu is known for its ability to absorb new flavors through spices and marinades.
- You can find tofu in the produce section of most grocery stores.
- There are two main kinds of tofu, silken (soft) and regular (more firm).
- One half-cup serving of raw firm tofu contains 10.1 grams of protein.
- One half-cup serving of raw firm tofu contains 94 calories.

Source: www.about.com

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NOT A MAIN SOURCE

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what we are looking for in our protein supplement. So anyone who is using nuts as a protein source, please don't. Nuts are not good for bariatric patients! Just to be clear, I am not saying that nuts aren't good food. Nuts actually are good food, just not good for bariatric patients. If you are going to have nuts, you should limit yourself to 1 or 2 ounces per week. That is all. Again, 1 or 2 ounces per week is the most you should have.

Now, what about dairy? First, let's take a step back and think about milk. What is milk? Milk is what a mother feeds her young when she wants the baby to grow. Guess what folks; we don't want you to grow. We want you to shrink! That is why you had bariatric surgery in the first place. So dairy is not really the best choice as a main protein source. Milk is a food that is high in everything: fat, sugar, protein, and

calories. It makes sense because if you want the baby to grow, it needs everything! So, I hope you can see that dairy is not really the best choice as a main protein source. As an occasional supplement it is okay, but it should not be your main source of protein. For example, it is okay to use non-fat milk to mix your protein supplement with, but I don't recommend using string cheese and yogurt as your main protein sources. For some reason, string cheese seems to be a favorite of bariatric patients. In general, I would stay away from it, but if you are going to use string cheese it must be non-fat, and I would only use it occasionally (once or twice per week) not every day.

So, the "take home" message is that nuts and dairy should not be used as main protein sources for bariatric patients. They have too many calories for the amount of protein they provide.



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