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Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD  
Hillsborough County Extension Agent  
(813) 744-5519, ext. 136  
email: [makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu)

### Protein - Enough or Too Much?

We all know that too many calories or too much fat is not a good thing. Too much vitamin A can weaken our bones. Too much calcium can prevent us from absorbing iron. But what about protein, can we get too much of that too?

After all, if we eat more protein than we need for protein, our bodies just burn it for energy, like starch or sugar. What's the problem with that? Well, extra protein can also be turned into extra fat the same way that extra sugar can. So that can be one problem.

But, the body has to do some extra work to change those proteins into energy or fat. Protein contains nitrogen, which starch, sugar and fat do not. So, when protein is burned for energy or stored as fat, the body has to get rid of a lot of excess nitrogen. It goes out as urine, meaning that the kidneys have extra work to do. Some medical people believe that very high protein diets can lead to kidney problems.

When the kidneys put nitrogen into the urine, a lot of calcium goes along with it. The loss of calcium can weaken your bones, and might increase the risk of osteoporosis, especially if your diet is low in calcium.

At the same time, most diets that are very high in protein are usually high in animal protein. Some research leads us to believe that animal protein is more likely to raise your risks of heart disease. And animal protein usually comes with animal fat, which also increases the problems your heart can have. Plus, meat, eggs and milk are usually low in the protective factors of fiber and antioxidants.

So, how much protein is enough? We only need less than half a gram of pure protein for each pound of body weight. If you weigh 100 pounds, you need about 36 grams of protein a day. Meat, poultry and fish have 6 to 8 grams per ounce. Milk has 8 grams in a cup, no matter

if it is whole or skim milk. Cooked beans have 7 grams in a half cup. Even a slice of bread or half cup of cooked pasta has 3 grams.

You see, it's very easy to get all we need. Most Americans get more than enough. High protein bars, shakes and supplements are a waste of money, and may cause problems in the future. For health today and health tomorrow, don't eat more than double what your weight requires, or a maximum of 100-120 grams a day. Your kidneys will thank you for it!