

Low Protein Diet

Background:

Low protein diets are most commonly used by individuals with severe liver or kidney disease. Patients with these conditions must limit their protein intake as excess amounts can build up in the body, worsening their condition. Protein contains nitrogen which, when metabolized, leaves the body in urine. If the person has trouble excreting urine, like many patients with a compromised liver or kidneys, the waste from nitrogen builds up in the bloodstream causing nausea, headaches, fatigue, and further damage to the liver and kidneys.

Purpose:

The purpose of the low protein diet is to reduce stress on the liver and kidneys. Foods high in protein like milk, eggs, and meat should be substituted for more complex carbohydrates which can provide extra calories for energy to compensate for those not gained from protein-rich food. Working with a physician, patients can find an acceptable level of protein their body can tolerate. Protein should never be completely removed from the diet.

What foods and food products ARE HIGH in protein?

- Meat
- Fish
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Peanut Butter
- Vegetables (less than above items, but still a good source of protein)
- Starches like breads, cereals, and pasta (least amount of protein on this list)

A diet completely lacking in protein cannot provide you with adequate nutrients for survival, so attempting a low protein diet without physician supervision is not recommended. Your healthcare provider is the best source of information for questions and concerns related to your health.