



**Protein Deficiency – Has it
Reached a State of**

**HEALTH
EMERGENCY?**



Anupama Menon

Founder of Right Living, India's Top Nutrition and Food Coach, also known as Cheat Guru

A large number of corporations are investing in employee health, wellness, and preventive care. One of the first steps that they could take is to nudge the need for personalised health among their employees, with a special focus on nutrition.

Protein is one of the most important macronutrients that your body needs every single day for sustenance, health, repair, and growth. To combat stress. To combat inflammation. For longevity.

Some facts about protein you must know:

80% of Indians are deficient in protein. This is as per the latest report of 2023 by the Indian Market Research Bureau.



The “Right to Protein” campaign announced by the government focuses on its theme “Easy Access to Protein” in 2023. It aims to drive awareness about the importance of protein, its sources, accessibility, and further efforts to make “nutrition security” a reality. It also encourages health professionals to spread awareness of how to include protein foods in the Indian population’s daily diet.

As a large section of the Indian population is vegetarian, there is an urgent need for awareness on how to achieve the daily requirement of protein in the diet.



Following are some basic points that will help you to complete the requirement of protein in your daily diet:

- Firstly, remember that the total amount of protein in your diet also comes from the carbohydrates that you consume. Rice, whole wheat, and millet contain about 11% protein, which in the usual servings of about 6-7 will yield about 20 grams of protein. This is important to understand because Indians do include a fair amount of carbs in their diet.
- To recognise proteins, think of the traditionally divided plate with divisions for rice/roti in the center surrounded by smaller divisions for dals, curds, vegetables, etc. Usually, any food besides vegetables that falls within these surrounding divisions on the plate will represent protein. Now, think, what foods would come in these smaller divisions? Chicken, egg burji/curry, curds, mutter paneer, fish curry/fry, dals, chole/rajma....what a long list!! All of these are proteins that you can choose from.

An average functioning person would need 5-6 servings of protein a day.

- How much and how do you best combine is the next big question. Complete proteins come from animal sources or their products and are needed for growth. Typically, fish, meats, eggs, and dairy. These products contain all the amino acids that are required for complete proteins. For vegetarians, the trick lies in combining carbs and proteins to substantiate the missing amino acids in their profile. Examples: rice and dal, roti and chole, rice and curds, paneer paratha, etc.



Hence, animal protein and carb-protein combinations make for the highest class of protein needed in the diet. It is especially important for growing children and those aiming to improve muscle quality.

For repair, all kinds of proteins will work singularly too; for example, a bowl of dal, sprouts, dal/pesarattu dosa, tofu salad, etc.

- While it's easy to include protein in your main meals, replacing frivolous food with protein snacks 3-4 times/week will go a long way in making up for the protein requirement. Example: a bowl of salad with sprouts/1 cube cheese/½ cup yogurt/Greek yogurt/milkshake, etc.
- Including buttermilk in your meals besides the usual protein and carb combination will compensate for the need for fermented foods and add to the protein servings for the day.
- Besides all of this, now people have the option of choosing from a good variety of organic and natural plant proteins available in the market. This is usually made from pea/soy proteins and may also contain a certain number of nuts/seeds, rice isolates, etc. 1 scoop of this in a day added to a smoothie or used as a post-workout drink may be a great idea for largely covering the protein requirement in anyone's diet. Such proteins available either from plants, could give between 18-25 gms/serving or scoop.

- Surprisingly, the latest research confirms that exercise plays a role in protein synthesis. Contracting muscles encourage protein synthesis and its release and hence about 1.5–3 hours of muscle training per week will help to achieve better muscle repair and growth. However, this kind of training will also require muscle recovery and stability which must come from easily absorbable protein right after the workout.

Finally, remember, protein inclusion in the Indian diet is not difficult considering that our absorption as nascent Indians of proteins from whole food carbohydrates is also supplemental. Too much protein in our diets without inclusion of at least 3–4 servings of carbs/day could lead to constipation and dissatisfaction over a period of time. Sustainability is key to how much protein we intake and how much we absorb and continue to take. Each person may follow the above guidelines, tweaking the quantities and method of intake based on their gut and requirements.

Anupama Menon
Nutritionist, Food Coach.



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CIN No.: U70100MH1982PTC027681 | License No. 291 (Validity: 18th February 2023 to 17th February 2026)

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