

## **The good news about animal proteins**

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In my previous article reviewing a trendy diet that shuns all animal protein, I vowed to speak more on the importance of these sources of protein for our health. The discussion can be long and hotly debated, but here are some brief points to consider.

Proteins are the building blocks of all of our organs, nerves, muscle and flesh as well as enzymes and anti-bodies. Although there are thousands of different types of proteins in the body, all proteins are combinations of just 22 amino acid components. Eight of these amino acids are “essential”, meaning that the body cannot make them, but must obtain them from the diet.

It is the presence of these 8 essential amino acids with which the body can make all of the other non-essential amino acids. If one or more of these essential amino acids are deficient, the body is unable to synthesize a complete profile of proteins.

Animal protein is a source of complete protein. It contains of all of the 8 essential amino acids. Sources of protein from the vegetable kingdom contain an incomplete protein profile. They are low in one or more of the essential amino acids.

Studies of our primitive ancestors show that they subsisted on a diet largely of meat and fat, supplemented with vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds. As agriculture grew, bringing more grains into the diet, bone and teeth structure declined and disease became more rampant. The vegetarian claim is that it is animal proteins that have shortened our life span. Quite the opposite is true. The most long-lived cultures have been shown to have diets high in good quality animal proteins and fats while vegetarian inhabitants have one of the shortest life spans.

From a vegetarian point of view, great care must be taken to mix and match vegetable and grain sources. In order to obtain the best profile: pulses (beans, legumes, lentils) and grains should be eaten together, but combined with a small amount of animal protein to make it complete. And fats...

To be adequately utilized, proteins need fats. Animal fats supply the Vitamin A and D needed for protein assimilation. This is why protein and fats occur together in eggs, milk, fish and meats. A high-protein diet that is low in fats can cause many problems, including a depletion of Vitamin A and D reserves. Another reason that a vegetarian diet can often fail us is that it lacks these important fat soluble catalysts. Taking high dosage synthetic replacements won't do. These fake vitamins lack the necessary synergistic factors.

We might think that obtaining proteins from isolate powders made from soy, whey, casein and egg whites may be a good substitute. These products, however, are made by a high-temperature process that denatures the protein, rendering it virtually useless to the body. Using these isolates along with a low-fat diet can create a multitude of deficiencies in the body. One result is an imbalance in calcium absorption and shown to lead to osteoporosis.

Care of the livestock is critical. When animals are fed grains, it changes the composition of their protein and fatty acid profile to one that is less conducive to health. Grass-fed animals, as well as wild game, generally have higher levels of lean protein and the omega-3 essential fatty acids. Grass-fed beef also contains high concentrations of Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA).

It is not only the protein content that benefits health, but also the better fatty acid composition of healthy meats that is of value. More reason to healthy meats and in your diet include:

- Decreasing your risk for cancer. CLA is a proven anti-carcinogen and can prevent cancer.
- Helps you build muscle mass. CLA increases lean tissue and may even be a treatment for obesity.
- Reduces inflammation. The high levels of omega-3 fatty acids in lean meat fights inflammation related to cardiovascular disease and arthritis.

The healthiest meats: organic, free-range, grass-fed and wild are also the best tasting. Public demand for healthy meats is on the rise, which not only benefits health, but also the care of the animals. You can now find organic and free-range meats in local stores, health food stores, co-op and farmers' markets. Organic and grass-fed may cost more, but your health and the health of our planet will be better supported in the long run. You will probably spend less at the doctor's office in exchange.