



## **Protein's role in the body.**

Proteins are made up of different amino acids which are literally the building blocks of life. There are 20 amino acids that are specific to the human body, 9 essential which we need to get from dietary sources and 11 non-essential which the body can make itself.

When new cells are made or damaged ones repaired the body follows a blueprint and uses these amino acids in different amounts depending on the type of cell. We're not just talking about building muscle here, this process happens when enzymes are made and production of white blood cells to support your immune systems.

## **Protein Sources**

Complete protein sources (those that contain all the essential amino acids) are usually animal products such as meat, fish, dairy and eggs. For those following a plant based diet the best sources of complete protein are soya in the form of tofu, textured vegetable protein and tempeh, quinoa and quorn.

Incomplete proteins (that are missing one or more of the essential amino acids) are things such as wholegrain bread, beans, chickpeas, grains, oats, wild rice, peas and lentils. These would need to be combined in dishes in order to get the full range of amino acids, like beans on toast or black beans and rice.

## **How much protein should I be including in my diet?**

The UK Eatwell guide recommends an amount of 0.75g of protein per kilo of body weight, which is on average around 55g for a man and 45g for a woman. This is the baseline amount required for someone not to be considered deficient and to suffer from associated health risks. This doesn't take into account an individual's lifestyle and goals.

Research has shown that somewhere between 2.3 and 3.1g of protein per kilo of lean body weight (or goal weight) is the optimal range for fat loss. Interestingly this is more than if you were looking to build muscle, the range here being 1.6g - 2.2g of body weight. This is due to the fact that protein helps maintain muscle mass during a period of being in a calorie deficit and also helps with keeping you feeling more full between meals and curbing hunger. So for someone on a fat loss journey who has a goal weight of 65kg we're looking at 150-200g each day. Which is a lot!! Both food volume and cost-wise.

Instead a common sense approach would be to aim for 3 meals made up of between 25g-40g of protein each plus one or two snacks of 15g-25g, depending on your goals.