

Seniors Eating Well Snippets

Module 3 – Protein power

Setup: Put the “cue block”, plastic pig and leaflets for the module on your registration table.

Explanation for “pass the pig”: Use to answers the protein questions below; have participants stand in a circle and pass to each other. Each time someone catches the pig, they have to come up with an answer.

Hold up the cue board. *Can you guess what this module is about?*

- *As we get older, we need to eat more protein to maintain our muscles and strength and to prevent falls and fractures. If we don't eat enough protein and get plenty of resistance activity we can lose up to 250g of muscle each year. This makes everything more physically tiring but can have other implications too. These include difficulty breathing, reduced capacity of heart muscle and slower moving gut. We also need protein for good bone health, skin strength, cell development and good immunity.*

Compared to younger adults, how much more protein do you think older adults need?

Answer: 25% more protein for older people to maintain muscles and strength

- *Now let's “pass the pig” to come up with examples of good protein foods.*

Looking for: fish and seafood (salmon, tuna, sardines, prawns, mussels), eggs, milk products (milk, yoghurt, cheese), white meat (chicken, turkey), red meat (beef, lamb, venison, pork, ham), legumes (cooked dried beans, split peas, lentils), tofu, nuts and seeds

- *It is also important for older people to spread protein foods across the day. That means eating protein at every meal not just a large amount at dinner which is the usual pattern in New Zealand. By eating protein at only one meal we will keep breaking down our muscle. To build muscle, little and often is the key.*
- *We can often forget to include a protein-rich food at lunch time. Let's “pass the pig” to come up with ways to make our lunch higher in protein.*

Ways to add protein: Grate cheese onto vegetables or pour over a cheese sauce, open sandwich or crackers with fish/meat/egg, add lentils/beans/leftover meat to soup and casseroles, add milk to tea/coffee, have yoghurt or custard instead of biscuits, use hummus/bean dip as a sandwich spread or with vegetable sticks, sprinkle nuts/seeds or cereal or salads, handful of nuts, add milk powder to milk/soups/baking, milk-based desserts.

Quiz Questions:

1. Is there any restriction on the number of eggs we should eat? How many are recommended per week? Who thinks 3? Who thinks 6?

ANSWER: Eggs are a great source of high-quality protein, and the cholesterol they contain has only a small impact on our blood cholesterol (eating saturated fat i.e. animal fat has a much bigger impact). The Heart Foundation recommends if you are at risk of CVD, you can eat up to 6 eggs per week as part of a healthy diet. Eggs are also a great source of vit D, Vit B12, zinc and iron. For more info you can go to the Heart Foundation website – type eggs in the search bar.

2. Nuts are a good source of protein. Brazil nuts have the added advantage of having a mineral that our soil is low in. What is this mineral?

ANSWER: Selenium. This is an important antioxidant and for preventing cell damage. For an added bonus, how many Brazil nuts do you need to get your selenium? 2-3 per day (don't overdo it – too many Brazil nuts can give you an overdose of selenium – a few is all you need).

(Other foods that have selenium: fish and seafood [$\frac{1}{2}$ hoki fillet gives you all you need for a day], eggs, pasta, bread, and meat also have some selenium).

3. Fish is a great source of protein and also an excellent source of which healthy fat?

ANSWER: Omega 3 (good for brains, heart, joints and as an inflammatory)

Who got all 3 questions correct?

Application:

Ask the group: *Take a minute to share with one other person what you will do this week to get more protein.*

Handout: Protein

