

Research Highlights:

- A growing body of research indicates that despite common misperceptions, protein doesn't negatively impact bone health.¹
- In fact, recent research suggests that high protein intake is associated with increased bone mass and reduced risk for osteoporotic fracture.²
- Dietary protein is important for optimal bone health, which can have a significant positive impact on overall health and quality of life especially among older adults.

Dear Colleague,

Nutrition is consistently identified as the cornerstone to optimal health. New research also suggests that protein, specifically, may play a vital role in bone health. Osteoporosis is a known, common health condition and generally speaking, there is a widespread recognition of the importance of calcium and vitamin D for building bone. A recent research review sheds light on protein's role in bone health, contradicting the myth that protein is detrimental to bone health and suggesting that dietary protein may instead be beneficial.

The research, published in the December 2009 edition of the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#)¹, details a systematic review including 61 studies from the past three decades that evaluated protein and bone health in healthy humans. The research indicates that despite common misperceptions, protein doesn't negatively impact bone health. The authors also note that the increasing burden of osteoporosis globally means modifiable factors such as nutrition have become of larger importance.

Additionally, the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*³ includes an accompanying editorial by Jane Kerstetter, PhD, RD, who echoes the importance of dietary intervention for bone health and highlights the fact that increasing dietary protein resulted in a slight positive association that was able to account for 1 – 2 percent of bone mineral density. Kerstetter notes that more research is needed to answer several important questions, but suggests that encouraging older adults to add a small protein source to meals is safe advice that will not harm their bone health.

This sentiment is supported by two additional research studies. A research review from the [Journal of the American College of Nutrition](#)² suggests that along with calcium and vitamin D, adequate intake of protein should be recommended in the prevention and treatment of postmenopausal and age-dependent osteoporosis. In addition, a recent study from the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#)⁴ examines data from a large population-based cohort of 631 premenopausal women and suggests that higher protein intake does not have an adverse effect on bone.

As this growing body of research indicates, despite common misperceptions, protein doesn't negatively impact bone health. In fact, recent research suggests that high protein intake is associated with increased bone mass and reduced risk for osteoporotic fracture.² While additional long-term studies should be completed, the data still indicates that inclusion of protein in the diet is a necessary component for optimal bone health across the lifecycle. These conclusions suggest a strong need for health care professionals to include protein in dietary recommendations, especially in light of the aging population for whom it is particularly important to maintain bone strength to prevent the risk of fractures.

I invite you to review this research as provided in the links to the abstracts. In addition, you may also be interested in the following fact sheets, which provide information about the health benefits of high-quality protein as well as tips for incorporating moderate amounts of protein into the diet throughout the day.

Please click on the links below to access the fact sheets:

- [Power Up for the Good Life with Lean Beef](#)
- [Lean Protein Can Help People Live Well and Age Vibrantly](#)
- [29 Lean Cuts of Beef Wallet Card](#)

I hope you find this information helpful as you translate nutrition research in your practice. If you have any questions as you review the materials, or if you would like a full text copy of the studies or editorial, please feel free to contact Katie Hayes at katie.hayes@edelman.com or 312-240-2690.

Thank you,

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References:

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2. Bonjour. Dietary Protein: An Essential Nutrient for Bone Health. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*. 2005; 24 (6): 526-536S.
3. Kerstetter JE. Dietary protein and bone health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2009; 90 (6) 1451-1452.
4. Beasley JM, Ichikawa LE, Ange BA, LaCroix AZ, Ott SM, and Scholes D. Is protein intake associated with bone mineral density in young women? *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Published online ahead of print March 10, 2010.



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