



THE PROTEIN GAP IN THE DIET OF COMMUNITY-DWELLING OLDER ADULTS: SMALL CHANGES, LARGE EFFECTS

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Rationale:

- Adequate intake of dietary protein is key for vitality and independence of community-dwelling older adults.
- It is estimated that over 50% of Dutch community-dwelling older adults does not meet protein recommendations.

Aim: To assess the effect of replacing low protein foods by high protein alternatives on daily protein intake in Dutch community-dwelling older adults.

Methods: The Dutch National Food Consumption Survey–Older Adults 2010-2012 was used for scenario modelling. Dietary intake was assessed for 739 adults aged 70+ with two 24-h dietary recalls, the 2-day average intake was used in current analyses. Food replacements were restricted to respondents with an average protein intake <1.0 g/kg BW/day (n=391). Within various food groups, all foods low in protein were replaced by commonly consumed foods high in protein. SAS Analytics software was used to estimate mean protein intake and to calculate percentages of participants with protein intake of ≥1.0 g/kg BW/day.

Results: Replacing foods from nine food groups by alternative products (table 1) resulted in an increase in mean protein intake from 1.0 to 1.2 g/kg BW/day. The percentage of participants with protein intake ≥1.0 g/kg BW/day increased from 46.3% to 85.8%. Food groups contributing most were (“Yoghurt” + “Cream desserts & Pudding”), (“Potatoes” + “Vegetables” + “Legumes”) and (“Non-alcoholic drinks” + “Dairy: milk”).

Table 1: Food groups and their alternatives.	
Food groups	Alternative product
Potatoes + vegetables + legumes	Lentils
Non-alcoholic drinks + dairy (milk)	Yoghurt drink with sweetener
Yoghurt + cream desserts & pudding	Low fat quark
Nuts & seeds + savory snacks	Unsalted peanuts
Bread	Multigrain bread with seeds
Breakfast cereals	Oatmeal
Soups	Soup with meat, vegetables & noodles
Spreads: sweet + savory spreads + cheese	Cheese (low fat)
Cakes + chocolate & candy bars	Muesli bar with chocolate

Conclusion: Small changes in food choices can have a substantial effect on protein intake of Dutch community-dwelling older adults. Results can be used as a basis for nutritional counseling.

Read more about this project:

[Project information](#)

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