

Nourish Your Body The Healthy “Whey”

(ARA Content) When many of us hear the word “whey”, we remember the old nursery rhyme about Little Miss Muffet. We know now that Little Miss Muffet was a lot smarter than we gave her credit for. She learned early on about the benefits of whey protein.

Whey protein is a high quality source of protein for everyone, no matter what the age.

Over the past 20 years, a number of studies have demonstrated the positive impact whey proteins have on improving health through good nutrition. Let’s take a look at the top 10 reasons why it may be desirable for you to add whey protein to your diet.

1. **Support Your Immune System** – Whey proteins contain high levels of the amino acid cysteine, which is needed to help the body produce glutathione, a powerful anti-oxidant that plays a key role in maintaining immune health. In fact, one of the first symptoms often noticed in individuals with autoimmune diseases, such as HIV, is a decline in glutathione levels. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of whey protein supplementation on individuals with various types of cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, and HIV. One recent study found that whey proteins inhibited the growth of breast cancer cells in a test tube. Another study showed a reduction in the size of cancer tumors in some patients when they consumed a whey protein product that delivered 24 grams of pure whey protein per day.
2. **Make Infant Formula Closer to Breast Milk** – Whey protein contains alpha-lactalbumin, which is the main component in human breast milk. For this reason, whey protein is a key ingredient in many infant formulas and therefore is often one of the first proteins consumed by infants. There is also good news for new mothers. According to the Journal of Pediatrics, whey protein formulas have been shown to help reduce the duration of crying spells in infants with colic.
3. **Benefit Cardiovascular Health** – A recent clinical study found that a specific type of hydrolyzed whey protein appears to reduce blood pressure in individuals who are borderline hypertensive. While whey protein should not be substituted for prescription medication, it may be a good complement to your current program. Look for more information later this year.
4. **Enhance Physical Performance and Help Create a More Desirable Body Mass Composition** – The demand for branched chain amino acids (BCAAs) increases during extended periods of exercise and added stress, which can lead to fatigue and reduced physical performance. It can also have a negative effect on the immune system. Whey proteins are naturally high in BCAAs and being easy to digest, they quickly provide the body with high quality protein and BCAAs.
5. **Contribute to a More Positive Mental Outlook and Better Performance** – Scientists have learned that stress causes the serotonin levels in the brain to decrease and this can contribute to mood disorders, such as depression. A recent study showed that a diet including alpha-lactalbumin enriched whey protein was helpful in improving mood levels and in increasing serotonin levels in the brain. Alpha-lactalbumin is the second most abundant component in whey protein and it is high in tryptophan, a natural relaxant.
6. **Provide High Quality Protein For Those on Lactose, Casein or Gluten Restricted Diets** – Whey protein isolate is the purest form of whey protein and is made up of over 90 percent protein. It contains only trace amounts of lactose therefore individuals with lactose intolerance can safely take whey protein isolate. It is also a great protein source for individuals with Celiac disease who are on gluten or wheat protein restricted diets.
7. **Help Maintain A Healthy Weight** – One of the components in whey protein, glycomacropeptide (GMP), has been shown to stimulate the release of cholecystokinin (CCK), an appetite-suppressing hormone. GMP also has promise in the area of dental health as it may help reduce dental plaque and dental caries.

8. **Maintain Strong Bones** – Osteoporosis, which affects over 25 million Americans, is a major health concern. Studies show that low protein intake, including lower levels of animal protein intake, was significantly related to increased levels of bone loss. Regular exercise and adequate amounts of protein and calcium in the diet can make a positive difference to bone health and may help to reduce the incidence of osteoporosis.
9. **Help Protect Against Certain Types of Harmful Bacteria and Viruses** – Lactoferrin, a minor component found in whey protein, is a known inhibitor of many forms of bacteria that may be responsible for digestive ailments including gastritis and ulcers. In addition, recent animal studies show promising results using concentrated lactoferrin to destroy *Helicobacter pylori* - the bacteria sometimes responsible for gastric reflux and certain types of cancer.
10. **Aid Wound Healing** – People who are recovering from surgery or are trying to heal a burn or wound often require additional protein in their diet. Exciting new research is being conducted that indicates certain whey protein components help promote the growth of new body tissue. This work is ongoing and still in the early stages.

Whey protein is readily available in a concentrated powder form and may be purchased in nutrition or health product stores, in many large grocery stores, or directly from suppliers on the Internet. There are many ways to consume whey protein as it can easily be added to water, juice or other liquids. It can also be added to softer solid foods, such as applesauce, or used as an egg replacement in many baking recipes. When buying a whey protein product, check the ingredient label to make sure that one of the following ingredients is listed as the first or second item.

- v Whey Protein Isolate – 90 percent or more protein with only trace amounts of fat and lactose
- v Whey Protein Concentrate – protein and lactose levels will vary so check the number of grams of protein in a serving and compare it to the total number of grams to determine the percent protein
- v Hydrolyzed Whey Protein Concentrate or Isolate – the protein chains are broken down into smaller, more easily digestible components called peptides

An excellent resource to help you learn more about whey proteins is the Whey Protein Institute. You can contact them through their website, www.wheyoflife.org, or by calling their toll-free number, (866) WHY-WHEY (866-949-9439).

References

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