



Protein Deep Dive for Fitness, Motherhood and Beyond with Kelly Jones MS, RD, CSSD, LDN (ep – 43)

[00:00:00] **Kelly Jones:** When we talk about intuitive eating and mindful eating, it like makes food seem like it's supposed to be so glamorous all the time. And that's just not reality. Like, yes, we want to enjoy food. So absolutely choose things that you like. But very often we have to be more practical and just do what is best for our body, our health in the moment.

And then we're going to better be able to enjoy that dinner because we're not ravenous or stressed out from a day where we weren't fueling properly.

[00:00:28] **Ginger Hultin:** Welcome to the Good Clean Nutrition podcast. I'm your host, Ginger Hultin, an integrative registered dietitian nutritionist. Today on the show, I'm talking with fellow registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in sports dietetics, Kelly Jones, all about protein.

I'm a person that just does better with more protein. I've figured that out over the years. It's more stabilizing for me, and it fills me up, it sticks with me longer. It's just brings more balance into my life. So if you're feeling that way too, I have a very important tip for you. Add more protein into your smoothies, whether you're using it for breakfast or to fuel your workout, or even for a quick lunch, you can't just have a smoothie, be juice and fruit, really it's much better if you have a protein base.

So I like to do like a dairy or non-dairy milk. And the non-dairy milk you should choose would be something like soy, because almond milk really hardly has any protein. Then, you might want to do a protein powder, that's totally fine. But you can also get a protein boost by doing some silken tofu, that's one of my favorites.

Or some almond butter, peanut butter, you could also use some yogurt. That's a really great way to boost the protein in a natural way. And then you also get other benefits like electrolytes and antioxidants.

Hey Kelly, welcome in.

Kelly Jones: Hey, thanks so much for having me.

Ginger Hultin: I was listening to the podcast that you were on with us previously about strength training and female athletes.

And you know, you have this rich background as an athlete, and I know that that's still part of who you are today. And part of training and being an athlete is thinking about protein. And I was looking at your Insta the other day, and you have some really great information about how there's some chatter about Americans.

They get enough protein, too much protein, you don't need to worry about it. But then I'm seeing you sharing some data that that's actually not true. So I'd love to just start there and hear more about the protein story from your, from your point of view.

[00:02:31] **Kelly Jones:** Yeah. You know, I think that's not just protein, right?

We're going to see polarizing information that is taken from, you know, we take one fact from a study and the media is going to spin it into other things. It kind of goes off the rails on social media. We leave people confused and not knowing what to do. And unfortunately, sometimes the voice of reason from dieticians and health professionals isn't as exciting and doesn't get as many views.

While protein is something that we can say a lot of Americans are getting enough of, I think that what we tend to really see is that there might be an overconsumption of animal proteins. compared to what we're seeing might be best for long term health. That comes along with a lot of saturated fats and other things that might not benefit health in excess.

Not to say people shouldn't be eating those things at all, but we definitely see that end of the spectrum. And then we see the side where people are dieting too much. They're cutting out meals. They're just not thinking about or have misinformation about how much protein or of a certain nutrient might be in a particular food.

We really just want to kind of nail down. Where are we really getting protein from? What are some of the sources we want to focus on? And how much is appropriate for you as an individual versus, you know, this group of people and this RDA random number that kind of gets thrown out there sometimes.

[00:03:47] **Ginger Hultin:** Can you define the RDA, recommended daily allowance, like what it is and what the number is that people are looking to?

[00:03:54] **Kelly Jones:** So the RDA is given in the amount that we should eat in grams per day per kilogram of our body weight. So, Most Americans aren't thinking about their body weight in kilograms. We're thinking pounds most of the time, but it's 0.8 grams per kilogram, which translates to 0.36 grams per pound. So that would mean you take your body weight in pounds, multiply it by 0.36, and that should give you your minimum protein needs per day. But that is the minimum. That really is set to prevent deficiency and not necessarily aligned with what research is showing supports optimal health and just satiety and physical function and longevity for adults. Um, and we do have different recommendations for varied disease.

States, people who are exercising more or less, but other than that 0.8 grams per kilogram for average people, the only other true recommendations that we see made most of the time are for true athletes that are competing at a high level. And that leaves this gap of everyone in between not really knowing what's necessary for them.

[00:04:57] **Ginger Hultin:** I want to dive deep into every single point you just made because there's so much complexity, but I'm thinking about myself or a lot of my clients that are very, very active, so they probably have higher needs, but we're not professional athletes, and so there's this huge in between. So RDA recommended daily allowance.

I want to hear more about those numbers, but let's also set the stage of protein versus carbs versus fat. Can you give us an overview of the macros and why protein is so different?

[00:05:26] **Kelly Jones:** Yeah, these macronutrients are all essential nutrients, all three of them. So while we're obviously talking a lot about protein today, I'm very pro carb and getting those high quality carbs in for energy.

So we want to look to carbohydrates and fat really as our energy sources. All of our macronutrients, again, provide energy. So we're getting energy or calories from all of them. That's, that energy can be used to fuel your body's cells. So, uh, that's the first thing I try to tell people. Calories are energy.

Look at them as that. And then the protein, we want to allow ourselves to use what we eat for structural and metabolic functions, I tell people. So structure, not just muscle, but framework of our bones, our organs and other tissues. And

then for metabolism, protein helps us to produce hormones and enzymes that regulate kind of everything that's going on in the body.

So if we're not eating enough of the carbs and fat for energy, we're going to start to use protein as an energy source, and it's going to limit its other functions there too. So as much as we talk about protein quantities. If you're not eating enough of the other things, that amount of protein isn't going to be at us either.

[00:06:31] **Ginger Hultin:** I had somebody come to me the other day with a serious medical condition and she said, my doctor told me to be on a low carb, low fat, high protein diet. And I said, well, there's only three macronutrients. You can't really be low in two and high in one. Like it doesn't quite work that way. So there's only so many levers you can pull.

And I know that as dietitians, we really look for balance among those three. Right, exactly.

[00:06:54] **Kelly Jones:** And you know, it's, Easy to see a trend, want to jump on it because whether it's someone attracted to it from a weight loss perspective or thinking it's better for longevity or performance, usually those things don't work long term because they're too restrictive.

You can't enjoy yourself, eat foods that you know, you love, have a social connection to and whatnot. So I'm always, Trying to talk to people about, okay, is this something you think you could do for the rest of your life? And if not, how do we make some of these smaller changes that can help you feel better day to day and long term too?

[00:07:27] **Ginger Hultin:** I work with my clients over a long period of time, and I always say, I want to navigate the seasons and maybe an illness or two, and your kids being in school versus out of school and vacations because your Diet, diet that you follow your dietary pattern has to be something that is realistic long term and that you're not just constantly going in and out of.

And a lot of times that makes people feel poorly about themselves.

[00:07:51] **Kelly Jones:** Exactly. And I love that you brought kids into the mix and talked about vacation. I want people to get to the point where they feel like, okay, I'm going to go on vacation and I still feel like eating vegetables, but I'm going to enjoy that special dish and make sure it also has enough protein in it.

Right? So it just becomes kind of automatic to include these balanced components of a meal while also enjoying these things that you love too. And not feeling like, okay, I'm going to go overboard for a full week.

[00:08:16] **Ginger Hultin:** Right, right. And when you take away that restrictive mentality or being really strict about a diet, then you're less likely to have to feel like I'm on or I'm off.

I know that you and I are both all about like relationship to food. And I think that's an interesting juxtaposition when you are focused on performance nutrition also, because it's like you want to have a good relationship with food, but you also want to perform as an athlete and feel correctly.

[00:08:39] **Kelly Jones:** Right.

And that's where, you know, full blown athlete or highly active recreational or trying to just make it to the gym a few times a week and chasing your kids to every activity that they're doing that requires a lot of energy. So it's one thing that I try to help people do a lot, because I find there's a lot of gaps earlier in the day.

And that makes things more likely to go haywire later in the day is, okay, how can we start off our day with protein, enough energy and balance so that you feel less stressed, full and satisfied. You can go on and be productive, do the things you need to do. And then again, not feel like going overboard later, even though you had the right intentions to start.

[00:09:16] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, I see a lot of people eating really light breakfast, maybe like one or 200 calories when really it should be much more substantial for most people. And then I also see a huge gap with protein in the morning. So I'm forever trying to get protein into that breakfast meal. I just find a lot of people maybe It's not part of the American diet or it's not a focus.

People don't know what to do.

[00:09:36] **Kelly Jones:** Exactly. Once you get to dinner, and you know, unless we're dealing with someone who I see a lot of athletes who are running marathons or training for something intense and I want that full breakfast and a nighttime snack, but for the average active person, eat enough earlier.

And once you get to dinner, feel like, okay, I had a balanced plate and I feel good and satisfied and done for the day. Like that's an awesome feeling to have

and not then, be searching for something else or piling on three portions of whatever it might be. It feels good to get to that place where evening is just normal and a smaller meal.

And I agree with you that that protein is really missing in the morning. And just adding on that, there's studies that show that helps. It's a tidy later in the day. There are studies that show, especially in the aging population, that that alone, just shifting protein intake to earlier without eating any more of it can actually increase muscle mass with age, which is great for longevity.

And then we also see that with intermittent fasting, especially for females before hitting the menopausal period, that if you're not eating in the morning and you try to go do an intense workout, your performance is going to be limited and then you might be more likely to overeat later too.

[00:10:43] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, that's such a great point.

When I talk about fueling for my like everyday athletes, and I think about myself in this too. I just, my workouts are terrible if I'm not fueled. If you're really going hard, it's like you need that energy.

[00:10:57] **Kelly Jones:** I'm not necessarily going to have a full breakfast if I get out and up and do an early morning workout, but it's just having something that allows your body to feel like it has energy and then you can sit down and have that full meal afterwards.

[00:11:08] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, yeah, that's a great point, too, because you have to have the balance of not feeling like overly full. There's so much nuance. But you have been talking about some research that has actually already changed the way that I'm thinking about The way I'm speaking to my clients, I have said a thousand times, well, you can't really utilize more than 25 to 30 grams of protein at a time, but I'm seeing you present some new studies that that is not the case.

Can you give us some history about that recommendation and why it's changing?

[00:11:37] **Kelly Jones:** There were a couple of studies looking at the amount of protein, the dose of protein, that might be able to be used for muscle protein synthesis after exercise or at specific times throughout the day. And again, like with other studies that was taken and turned into, you can only digest 30 grams of protein at a time.

You might have someone who's 5'2 and 110 pounds, and then you could have someone who's 6'2 and 225. And you can't say that they're both going to be able to digest, absorb, and utilize the same amount of protein. That just doesn't make sense. Especially not considering other factors like their activity level, their muscle mass, all of that.

So what we really find in studies and This number of 30 gets thrown out a lot kind of as an average, right, for an average person's weight, whatever that is. What we see via the ISSN, International Society of Sports Nutrition, we're looking at athletes and active people. So we're between 0. 25 And 0. 4 grams per kilogram of your weight dosed throughout the day is likely to be the most appropriate to optimize muscle protein repair or muscle repair and growth if growth is a goal for you.

And that range might vary just based on preferences or what you feel like eating that day. That range might vary if you have really specific goals around what you're trying to gain from your workouts and fitness and, and protein intake. But. That range does give us some insight. And for someone who's maybe 130 pounds, you might only need 22 grams.

For someone who is twice that weight, we're looking above 40, right? So it really does come a little bit more down to the individual. And it's hard to give those individualized recommendations on a large scale in the media or via social media sometimes because people just want a number. They don't want to go back and figure out, okay, what's this calculation for me?

[00:13:27] **Ginger Hultin:** This is a level of personalization that is very needed.

[00:13:30] **Kelly Jones:** For sure. And You know, as we talk about calculations too, I want to put out there that I'm not a big fan of every person counting and measuring everything they're eating all the time every day. For some people, that works. For a lot of others, it's too much out of time and stress and might get a little too obsessive for people who might have tendencies for disordered eating.

So, I think that just knowing these numbers and starting to just have more awareness rather than consistent counting is also important. And you want to be realistic with yourself and what's best for you in terms of mental health for how you are approaching meeting these goals too. For some people, this might be, um, A few days every month I log what I'm eating just to see where my protein and fiber intake is and if I'm on track.

And for other people it might be I can meet with a dietitian and they can help me evaluate this by looking at what I'm eating in a day. And for some others it might make more sense to count a little bit more regularly. The familiarization, knowing what you need and just starting to become more aware of how much protein is in certain foods is a good place for most people.

[00:14:33] **Ginger Hultin:** As dietitians it's so easy to just jump it in the numbers and we think about protein in grams and we know where protein is, but. One of the number one educations I do is with people that are like, how much protein do I need? And then I tell them, and then they're like, how do I get that? What does that mean?

Yeah. Yeah, because we don't have that education just, in school? Like, how would you ever learn that?

[00:14:59] **Kelly Jones:** Exactly. I think the awareness is where most people fall in, and just better understanding where they are.

[00:14:59] **Ginger Hultin:** But we are probably going to be talking about numbers quite a bit. Yeah. Because you work with athletes, and so that's a group that commonly might need to be paying more attention to specifics.

[00:15:09] **Kelly Jones:** For sure. Yeah. And it depends, you know, on the score, on the individual. We do see a lot of disordered eating and eating disorder risks in this population, so always something to consider. At least on the dietitian side, we're paying more attention to numbers or at least giving guidance based on how a plate should look and how foods can be balanced out and all of that too.

[00:15:29] **Ginger Hultin:** When we're thinking about a person's protein needs and how to personalize it, can you talk a little bit about optimal protein and how you might look at that by age, biological sex, lifestyle, sports, like how do you start to put that matrix together?

[00:15:44] **Kelly Jones:** Age is definitely something we want to consider as we look at the aging population.

There's again evidence suggesting 1.2 might be a good minimum and even more might be helpful as well. For younger adults, Before we get into your perimenopause menopause, that's where I'd want to bump it up to probably like 1.5 minimum. for women just because we're in a phase where we know that hormones are going crazy.

I think there's a lot of talk about bone loss and fat gain, but we miss the piece where that muscle loss comes with the bone loss too. And we know that there's research tying muscle mass to longevity. Because of your ability to stay functional, reduce the risk of fracture, support your bones and everything else that you have to do, prioritizing protein is one of the most important nutrition goals to try to preserve as much muscle as we can.

[00:16:31] **Ginger Hultin:** These are higher numbers than I usually calculate, but I think this is going to help change the way that I practice, especially for my folks in perimenopause and menopause. It makes so much sense to be bumping up protein because it's also the baseline of hormones, like you said, and it's very stabilizing and satiating, just filling and just helps you feel, feel more balanced throughout your day.

[00:16:54] **Kelly Jones:** Exactly, and hormones in general are going crazy then. People start to see some things happening sometimes with blood sugar. So, we do have evidence around increased protein recommendations for diabetes management. So, there's no reason why it can't be preventative if you're in the prediabetes stage or have a strong family history.

And some studies suggest up to 2 grams per kilogram, I will disclaimer say. chronic kidney disease, if that is something someone's dealing with, absolutely much lower if you're on dialysis, all that. But for someone in the prediabetes, early diabetes phase or with a strong family history, higher amounts can actually help with sensitivity to insulin and A1C long term too, and that might start to pop up in that perimenopause menopause phase for women.

[00:17:40] **Ginger Hultin:** It's no surprise that Orgain is America's number one plant based protein powder brand because their products are really delicious and made with clean ingredients. I love their organic plant-based protein powder for my clients because it tastes amazing and it's also packed with nutrients. It comes in a large variety of flavors and offers up to 21 grams of high-quality plant protein.

It has a complete amino acid profile. There's no added sugar and no artificial sweeteners. Visit [Orgain.com](https://www.orgain.com) to learn more.

Ginger Hultin: One reason that I love following your work is because you are an athlete, but you also focused on plant based and you mentioned it earlier, not that animal proteins are bad. I think they have a great place for some folks.

But the reality is all plant proteins have antioxidants. Meat just doesn't have that. Plant proteins have different nutrients. vitamins and minerals. They also often have fiber. Meat can never have fiber. So there's some very interesting anti inflammatory benefits to eating plant based proteins.

[00:18:40] **Kelly Jones:** I completely agree.

And I'm, I'm very, I say I'm plant forward. I, you know, may not eat meat myself and I may attract a lot of plant-based eaters to my practice, but we also work with plenty of people who do include meat and respect whatever anyone's wishes are for what they want to include, but we're just very pro plant and increasing the plant foods that you're eating.

So if that means reducing the portion of beef on your plate to add some lentils into the mix or some other sort of plant protein, then that can have really big benefits long term, just those small little tweaks along the way. Or choosing one or two plant based dinners a week that don't contain, uh, an animal protein can, again, provide those antioxidants, that fiber, microbiome benefits, that, that gut health that everybody keeps hearing about and have really great long term health benefits too.

[00:19:27] **Ginger Hultin:** People come to me and they're like, I want to work with you, but I don't want to be vegan. And I'm like, no problem. Like I, I proudly work with people on all diets, but Pretty much no matter how you eat, from very plant based to not at all, most people need to be eating more plants. And it's just like you said, simple swaps, bringing things in, and you don't have to get rid of foods that you truly enjoy.

[00:19:49] **Kelly Jones:** Right. And again, it is the eating more plants because I've had vegans come to me too, who have high cholesterol, even though they're vegan and running marathons. And you look at their diet and it is a lot more ultra processed foods and a lot less whole plants, you know, it's working out, okay, how can we tweak this?

And even if you're traveling or on the go, Let's find ways to incorporate more of these, these whole foods or options that are, you know, more rich in antioxidants or have ingredient lists that are things we feel just a little bit better about including on a regular basis. And that are going to benefit you holistically.

[00:20:18] **Ginger Hultin:** I love that you mentioned gut health. We're talking about hormone balance, uh, blood sugar balance. There's just so many far

reaching effects. So you work with really busy people. It sounds like, you know, your folks are professionals and parents and also athletes. I would say my physicians, my nurses, my teachers, those are some of the hardest professions to try and fit in balanced meals because you don't always get to eat.

At the right time, you're, you're very busy, you have some limitations. How do you help busy people implement more protein into their diets?

[00:20:54] **Kelly Jones:** Finding those more whole food convenience foods can be really helpful for people who cannot actually stop to have a snack. Snack. Like the physicians, teachers, bus teachers, my goodness, like can't even, you know, stop to go to the bathroom sometimes.

So um, you know, when we're looking at these populations, sometimes having a protein rich beverage can be helpful. I have one doctor who instead of just having his second coffee in the morning, one swap that we made was that that would be a soy latte for him. So we're getting at least 10 to 12 grams of protein in there.

And that's just a little bump for him versus having just a black coffee. And that is kind of serving as a snack for him. And no, we're not getting fruits and vegetables and all those things in, but that's what works for him right now. And that was a step in the right direction. For someone else, it might be a protein smoothie and you're incorporating some of those fruits and veggies and, you know, a protein powder or a Greek yogurt or a plant based Greek yogurt, and that's squeezing in, uh, All of those wonderful things that we're talking about and they can sip on it for a little while.

I try not to have people like sip all morning because I think that there is value in trying to have a meal at a certain time so your body can process and digest and then have that more catabolic phase and get your blood sugar back to normal. But, you know, if they can do that within a half hour timeframe while they're, you know, in a lighter period where they don't have to be talking as much, then that can definitely benefit them.

Yogurts, certain like protein or nut and seed bars can really kind of do the trick for a lot of people.

[00:22:22] **Ginger Hultin:** It's not like you have to sit down and make this huge, giant, perfect breakfast every morning. You can have grab and go things that are easy to digest and assimilate, even if you're in your car or working or talking to folks.

[00:22:35] **Kelly Jones:** Exactly. When we talk about intuitive eating and mindful eating, it like makes food seem like it's supposed to be so glamorous all the time. And that's just not reality. Like, yes, we want to enjoy food. So absolutely choose things that you like, but food. Very often we have to be more practical and just do what is best for our body, our health in the moment, and then we're gonna better be able to enjoy that dinner because we're not ravenous or stressed out from a day where we weren't fueling properly.

[00:23:01] **Ginger Hultin:** You and I talked about the importance of protein at breakfast. A lot of my clients ask me, like, exactly how much protein do I need at any given time? Like, a lot of people think about meals or foods individually, and I'm constantly trying to expand that to the entire day because I see somebody's whole needs being spread out throughout the day.

So how do you address, like, protein per meal or snack versus what their entire day looks like across the week?

[00:23:30] **Kelly Jones:** Looking at ranges is better than looking at a defined number. So if at breakfast you can get between 15 and 20 grams for some people or between 20 and 25 for other people, then that's a good goal.

If they're having next to nothing or used to just grabbing like a sugary muffin or something along those lines, right? So that helps to kind of give them an idea of what range they can be in and start to familiarize themselves with foods that are going to contain that amount. But it might also be taking something they're already doing and adding to it.

So you love oatmeal in the morning. Well, that's fine. Let's cook it with milk or soy milk instead of water and that alone is going to make a drastic difference for you in terms of how much you're getting satiety, how we're starting your day. And then I find that lunch and dinner times that people tend to usually do a better job at incorporating that protein.

I find that lunch is a time that often especially for some of our busy professionals who might be ordering a lunch or throwing together a salad. It's salad ingredients and vegetables with salmon or with chicken or with tofu. And it's, okay, where's the energy that you need? And so I think lunchtime very often is less, um, a protein problem and more, uh, get some energy and fiber from carbs issue for people.

And then dinner, we tend to center protein on the plate. So those are the two meals I feel like I'm trying to help people balance in other ways. And it really is

that breakfast, uh, and sometimes snacks too. And people think, Oh, I had a protein rich snack. I had hummus with my carrots and chickpeas. Six grams of protein per serving, hummus usually two.

So kind of again, raising awareness of some of these foods that people think are higher than aren't and just a few more grams of what they're doing is progress in the right direction versus it has to be this number every time.

[00:25:12] **Ginger Hultin:** Just knowing how much protein is in certain foods can be so empowering.

Agreed. I wanted to hear more from you about the concept of quality protein. Uh, you hear this a lot in the plant-based world, I have a personal vendetta against like protein combining or the concept of having to like, calculate your protein sources.

[00:25:35] **Kelly Jones:** When it comes to quality, I think it gets confusing because people forget that, you mentioned this earlier, we don't just eat single foods usually, we're eating meals, right?

And there are typically multiple sources of protein within a meal. So, if I'm having oats and I'm adding peanut butter to that, there's a, quote, complete protein in that meal. You might also fall in the same lines as me, tell me if I'm wrong, where plants technically all have all of the essential amino acids.

It's just in much smaller amounts for certain plants. Like even an apple, technically, they're all present, but you know, very, very low amounts, right? So when you hear complete or high quality, it doesn't necessarily mean that that food is a healthier food for you. Like, beef isn't necessarily healthier than edamame, right?

But the protein in them is thought to be digested, absorbed, and utilized more efficiently in the body than the protein from corn, let's say. Right, just to throw a different food out there. Part of that is, again, the quantity. It really comes from the quantity of essential amino acids that are there. So our essential amino acids are the ones that our body cannot produce on its own.

So we have to eat them each day in adequate amounts in order to produce all the proteins that our body needs to make. Some foods, like we're talking about with plants, are limited in them, but You know, you could also take something like quinoa, which is identified as a complete protein, and one serving of quinoa, that's six grams, is not going to be enough for you at a meal, right?

So again, it's coming back to, can we get a good dose of protein at a meal? It's probably coming from mixed protein sources anyway. So we probably don't have to even think much about the protein combining. And then for athletes, there's specific amino acid we want to consider, and that's leucine. Leucine has been found to be what we call our trigger for muscle protein synthesis.

So it's involved in a pathway where it tells the body, okay, we're ready to go. We're ready to start this muscle repair and potentially growth. So having an adequate dose of leucine at a meal, especially a post workout meal, or in each time you eat in a like 24 hour period after a tough workout may really be helpful to optimize that muscle protein repair.

Average person doing average amounts of activity. Don't worry about it so much, but people that were really dialed into fitness goals or athletic goals, that might matter a little bit more for you where In addition to animal proteins, dairy and soy protein, we look to things like pea protein and, and suki beans and lentils and quinoa and even oats.

Even something like a cup of wheat pasta is going to give you a half of gram. So if you're mixing that with lentils as your meat sauce, then you're reaching that leucine content that you might need for this trigger that we're talking about. So, um, long answer, but I agree with you. For most people, the protein combining doesn't matter as long as we're eating a variety of protein sources at the end of the day.

[00:28:29] **Ginger Hultin:** You mentioned needing to be careful about saturated fat and excess from some animal protein sources. Is that the main issue that you see from animal protein sources, or what else do you need to watch out for?

[00:28:44] **Kelly Jones:** There's mixed evidence and people can kind of get split on this, but saturated fat, I think, is one of the more well accepted things when it comes to research.

And this absolutely in excess is going to have an effect on things like blood cholesterol for a lot of people, especially those with a history of familial high cholesterol. Another thing to consider is just total fat, right? So if you're choosing these fatty meats often, or if you're having ones that are fried or prepared in certain ways, having too much overall fat isn't necessarily best for long term health and definitely not performance either.

So we know that just high amounts of fats or the fats that are used in fried foods and whatnot are not going to have that profile that we want for recovery. They're not going to be the best source of energy, may not support your digestive tract as well. So we talk a lot about omega 3 is getting anti-inflammatory fats in there, right?

So I'm having so much animal fat. That's gonna throw off my balance or my ratio of my saturated fats and my polyunsaturated fats that are omega 3s to my monounsaturated fats and my omega 3s. So monounsaturated fat and omega 3s are more anti-inflammatory fats that are better for a long term health.

They're better for your heart, for your brain, we know, and we also see a relationship with things like muscle recovery and joint health and whatnot. So if we're having a very animal protein heavy diet, there's a good chance that we're going to have Not only saturated fat, but maybe some other types of fat in there that kind of throw off that balance.

Whereas we could be focusing on walnuts and avocado and if not fish, then algal oil in some sort of capacity in your diet to have a more anti-inflammatory balance there.

[00:30:28] **Ginger Hultin:** You mentioned monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Those are the unsaturated fat. family, I guess. You'll often hear them called Mufas and Pufas, which is kind of fun.

And so we're working on the Omega 3s, which, like you mentioned, comes from fatty fish, but also hemp, chia, flax, and walnuts, specifically.

[00:30:47] **Kelly Jones:** If someone's following an entirely plant-based diet. Again, there's some controversy here from some people, but for the most part, we see in research that you likely cannot convert the omega 3 in our plant omega 3s fully to enough of things like EPA and DHA, which you may have heard of, that are going to be great for brain health and exercise recovery.

[00:31:10] **Ginger Hultin:** Right, so the body's conversion can be less than optimal. Uh, my understanding is especially for men. And so, a lot of times for my clients, especially my vegan folks, I am doing a direct source, which would be algae oil supplement. Supplements have an interesting place. You know, we've talked about them a couple times today.

Branched chain amino acids or, or omega 3s. And sometimes they can help you fill the gaps.

[00:31:34] **Kelly Jones:** Absolutely. Food first all the time. And then, you know, where are these gaps for you? Maybe it's just a phase of life that you're in where that gap is there because other things are going on and you can't prioritize that right now.

Or while you're working on other things, we'll get there eventually, but definitely can have a place. And again, should usually be individualized person to person.

[00:31:53] **Ginger Hultin:** Mm. Well, speaking of phase of life, you are a mom who has navigated postpartum returning to work, including intense exercise. I wanted to hear a little bit more about that, and then talk more about pregnancy and protein and postpartum and protein.

[00:32:09] **Kelly Jones:** Both of my pregnancies, I was very nauseous for a lot of it. And if you were to look at my diet, you would think she's a dietitian? So the, you know, the cravings, I was not one of those people that have cravings. I was just, I don't feel like eating most of the time. Vegetables didn't sound great. So I was getting really creative and how to include them.

Protein was definitely a challenge. So it was more of our legume based pastas. I could do eggs, but it like had to be sheet pan eggs with my second, you know, you have to like be creative, figure out how am I going to fit this in. And like the day that I would crave a vegetable, I'd be like, give me all the vegetables.

I was also maintaining a high level of activity. It was something that kind of got my brain away from Feeling nauseous. I had a little anxiety before, um, having my first just jumping into this new phase of life. And how is this going to affect my career and everything else? Even though I was, you know, excited, I had some anxiety there too.

And so exercise was helpful for me with that. And I was doing, you know, barbell squats until a couple days before he was born. There's a lot of, I think, stigmas around exercise still in pregnancy. There's a lot of controversy around return to exercise and different forms of exercise and postpartum. And then again, there's the nutrition component and how does this all fit in.

So I think that we have to think about What are my intentions with how I'm eating? Is it to support a healthy body, a healthy baby, a healthy pregnancy and postpartum, or is it focused on trying to manipulate my body because I'm anxious about how it's changing? Is it trying to be too obsessive about what you're eating because you're fearful of what's going to happen to the baby?

Those are all, I think, things that we need to talk about more and express more because even though we've made leaps and bounds versus a few decades ago in women expressing how they feel and having these discussions about these sensitive phases of life. People are still reserved about what they're going through and how it's affecting their choices day to day.

So complex. So complex. Really is. Really is. And every pregnancy, every delivery, every postpartum experience is different.

[00:34:12] **Ginger Hultin:** I want to hear about protein as a pregnant person and then protein during breastfeeding. How do those needs change?

[00:34:19] **Kelly Jones:** Protein needs during pregnancy. We do see an increase in that RDA there.

So it is recommended 1.1 grams per kilogram. More important in the second and third trimester. That first trimester is a time where really weight gain and increased protein needs don't matter as much. But as we've talked about, I'd recommend most people at 1.2 minimum anyway. Uh, if you are strength training and exercising throughout your pregnancy, which again is recommended.

Think about how that 1.1 might not be adequate for you. So that is the minimum for pregnancy, but to really ensure that not only are we supporting baby, but supporting ourselves, I think that more is helpful. I think at that time too, people need to think about a lot of times these cravings come from, eating like you were eating before when you have higher needs.

And then, okay, I'm craving sugar now because I didn't eat enough all day long and maybe didn't balance out my meals enough, or I'm having aversions to the proteins I used to eat. So now I'm really craving carbs because my blood sugar is not stable throughout the day. So again, getting creative with breakfast, lunch, snacks, get enough protein there for the satiety.

factor, the blood sugar control, and that might be able to help with some of these intense cravings some people are having. In the postpartum period, the RDA is 1.05 if you're postpartum in nursing. There's no increased need or increased recommendation just for recovery from delivery and everything that your body just went through.

So when you think about this delivery process, you have this child that's leaving you, you're delivering a placenta, all this stuff happening with your uterus,

there's a lot of recovery going on. for a while here on top of sleep deprivation, taking care of baby, all of that. Not having an increased recommendation past just the recommendation for lactation, I think is doing women a disservice.

So we absolutely need to be ingesting more than that 0.8 grams per kilogram in that postpartum period for recovery. And I really look at that delivery as a marathon. You're going to be really soaring in recovery for, you know, at least a week afterwards, that should be a period after work. You're really maximizing your protein and antioxidant intake and it goes past that marathon recovery.

You're going past a week here, obviously, uh, with all the recovery going on down there. There's a couple of studies showing that needs for women who are exclusively breastfeeding their infants in that first six months postpartum may be as high as professional athletes in the 1.7 to 1.8 grams per kilogram range.

There's a study showing that having 1.5 grams per kilogram each day in protein per your body weight. if you are nursing exclusively, if that 1.5 is actually putting people in a negative nitrogen balance. Negative nitrogen balance means essentially you're going towards protein deficiency. You're, um, so with those few studies in consideration, obviously we need more research.

This is an under researched population for sure, but those studies really clue me into protein being something we need to talk about and prioritize a lot more in that postpartum period.

[00:37:25] **Ginger Hultin:** I did not realize how high those needs were, but it makes sense. Like everything your body is going through. Maybe you had like a surgery also as part of your delivery. I mean, post surgery, your needs go way up. So why wouldn't it post delivery?

[00:37:39] **Kelly Jones:** And yeah, and those aren't the recommendations you get. You're sent home with all the recommendations for baby. And not a whole lot for yourself. And you go to that six week follow up and it's again, more about the baby. They may ask you about postpartum depression, things like that now, which is very important, um, you know, clearly for exercise without much direction, but not really talking about where's your nutrition, you know, are we recovering in the way that we should and supporting our body with food?

[00:38:04] **Ginger Hultin:** Kelly, this has been so interesting. It really shapes the way that I think about protein and postpartum and athletes and different protein needs throughout life. I would love to talk more about hydration because

that's another piece of fueling the athlete in different aspects from kids to adults to older folks.

So I would love to pick up there on our next episode.

Kelly Jones: It sounds great. I look forward to that.

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