

## Text 5 – Protein powders may cause harm, Dr Libby says

Learner's purpose for reading: To understand a well-known figure's opinion about using protein powders

Text read:

# Protein powders may cause harm, Dr Libby says



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Protein shakes make it easy to eat too much protein, dietitians say.

Protein powders might be trendy, but a top nutritional author advises against them.

Biochemist and nutrition specialist Libby Weaver - known as Dr Libby to her legion of fans - says users risk damaging their livers and kidneys.

"If [protein] accumulates and the liver and the kidneys can't keep up with the amount of that, then health can suffer," Weaver said.

"There are many of them [powders] that are way too concentrated in proteins."

Weaver said not enough is known about the long term consequences of drinking isolated extracts.

"It is all very new, really, from an evolutionary perspective. They might be completely safe, but we don't really know that yet."

She said personalised advice should be sought before adding isolated protein into a diet, especially for people with health complications such as autoimmune diseases.

"There's been this big cultural shift for people to eat bucket loads of protein and protein powder.

"I personally don't believe that they are necessary ...They're just available everywhere now."

Weaver said there is nothing in nature that is 100 per cent protein. The highest is animal meat such as beef, chicken and fish, all about 25 per cent protein.

"If you're having a protein drink, some of them are going to be 80 per cent or even higher in their protein content."

Science currently advises about 1 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight per day.



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Dr Libby Weaver says we don't know enough about some of the long term consequences of drinking protein shakes.

A government-run Health Promotion Agency survey found that 14- to 18-year-old males on average exceeded the recommended dietary intake (from any source) by 40g.

Registered Waikato dietitian Katherine Webby said while protein powders can help athletes, they are unnecessary for the average person.

"Long term, if you were really exceeding your protein intake, it can increase your risk of things like bone fractures or osteoporosis.

"If someone has a pre-existing kidney disease or if their kidneys are a bit dodgy already, then consuming lots of protein could accelerate the decline of their kidney functions."

Webby said food trends have seen lots of people increase their protein intake without checking with a dietitian or doctor.

"Most people are exceeding their daily requirements of protein through food alone, mainly by increased portion sizes. Throw protein shakes into the mix and you can kind of see how it stacks up.

"There's no added benefit from exceeding those requirements and, in fact, there are those risks."

Protein powders are widely available in supermarkets, health stores and pharmacies.

There are currently no restrictions on the amount of sugar, carbohydrate or protein that protein powders can contain, since they are considered a supplementary food.

According to MPI, under the Supplemented Food Standard, protein powders considered to be supplemented food or formulated supplementary sports foods must include the recommended daily dose of the nutrition found in the supplement if exceeding the recommended dosage of a product could cause harm.

Under the Formulated Supplementary Sports Food Standard, manufacturers must state that it should be used alongside appropriate exercise and is not suitable for children under 15 or pregnant women unless under medical or dietetic supervision.

**- Stuff**

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#### Learner evidence:

*I read this article as part of my nutrition project to learn about what Dr Libby thought about protein powder and protein products. I found it very*

*④ interesting and I was surprised by what she said, because she said that we*

*① ② already eat enough protein and that most people don't need to add*

*protein shakes or whatever to their diets. And she said that if we have*

*① too much extra protein then it can actually do damage to our liver and*

*④ kidneys. This was very interesting and surprising since I always see people*

*who are supposedly fit and healthy using protein powders. Dr Libby was*

*③ trying to warn people not to just consume all this extra protein without*

*checking first with their doctor or dietitian to see whether they actually*

*needed it, because it might be harmful. This was the first time I have*

*④ heard or read this opinion so I was glad that I found this article.*