



Your body gains energy through food, and expends energy through activity. In order to lose fat, which is just stored energy, it is necessary to create a sustained energy deficit in your metabolism. This is the basis of all fat loss. Unfortunately, an energy deficit can also cause your body to lose muscle as well as fat, a fact of which all hardcore bodybuilders are keenly aware. A recently published study sponsored by the Military Nutrition Division of the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine appears to confirm what most bodybuilders have long believed - when dieting to lose fat, higher protein intake helps to preserve muscles.

Thirty-nine adult test subjects were assigned diets containing protein at either the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA), two times the RDA, or three times the RDA for a period of 31 days. A 10 day weight maintenance period was followed by 3 weeks of 40% energy deficit. Body composition and muscle protein synthesis were measured halfway through the study period, and then again at the end.

Weight loss during energy deficit was similar among all test subjects regardless of protein intake, but loss of fat mass was greater, and loss of lean muscle mass was lower among those subjects who received two and three times the RDA of protein compared to those receiving only the RDA. The anabolic muscle response to a protein rich meal during the energy deficit phase was the same as the weight maintenance phase for those receiving two and three times the RDA, but was lower during the energy deficit phase for those receiving only the RDA. The researchers concluded that consuming protein in excess of RDA may help preserve fat-free mass during short term weight loss.

So there you have it. Now go out and get that steak! :-)

REFERENCES

Pasiakos SM, Cao JJ, Margolis LM, Sauter ER, Whigham LD, et al, Effects of high-protein diets on fat-free mass and muscle protein synthesis following weight loss: a randomized, controlled trial. Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Journal, Vol. 27, No. 9, 3837 - 3847, September 2013