

## **Study Finds Protein-Packed Foods may not be as Healthy as you Think**

Scientists at Miguel Hernández University in Spain have conducted a study to characterize nutrient content and evaluate the healthiness of foods with [protein](#) claims.



### **Study**

Protein-fortified foods and protein and amino acid supplements are becoming increasingly popular worldwide as people typically perceive these foods as [healthy](#).

Recent survey findings indicate a 26% compound annual [growth rate](#) in the number of newly launched foods and beverages with protein claims in Europe from 2017 to 2022. In Australia, the growth rate is 12%.

A global survey conducted in 2022 reveals that approximately 17% of consumers ask for high-protein foods even though these products are highly priced. Regarding people's perception, studies indicate that foods with protein claims are generally regarded as foods with high nutritional value that are good for building [muscles](#), staying healthy, and increasing longevity.

However, the study emphasizes that this perception may be misleading. Several scientific reports claim that foods rich in protein can also contain other [unhealthy ingredients](#), such as sugar, salt, and saturated fats, and can have a high-calorie content.

In this study, scientists have determined the prevalence and [nutritional](#) quality of foods with protein claims available in the Spanish market by analyzing data from the Spanish Food Database, BADALI.

### **Results**

The study analyzed 4325 processed [foods](#) of 12 different types. About 13% of these food items exhibited protein claims.

The prevalence of foods with protein claims varied across different food types. The highest proportion of protein claims was observed among plant-based meat analogs (68.2%), followed by bars (35.3%) and yogurt or [dairy dessert](#) substitutes (21.3%). No protein claim was observed in biscuits and fruit drinks.

Approximately 60.4% of the analyzed food items had fortified proteins. The highest rate of protein fortification was observed in bars and plant-based [meat analogs](#), where nearly 90% were

fortified. Conversely, milk substitutes and yogurt or dairy dessert substitutes showed the lowest fortification rates (7.9% and 3.3%, respectively).

Plant proteins were more frequently added to fortified items (41.7%) than animal proteins (25.9%). The most commonly added plant protein was [gluten](#), followed by milk and soy proteins.

### **Conclusion**

The study finds that about one in seven foods in the Spanish market carries protein claims, and approximately 60% of these food items have fortified proteins primarily from [plant sources](#).

The nutritional quality of foods with protein claims is significantly worse than those without such claims. This highlights the need for consumers to carefully evaluate the nutrition labels on these foods, particularly as protein claims can create a misleading [health halo](#).

These findings suggest that foods with protein claims perceived as healthier by the general population are often high in critical nutrients such as sodium, fat, and sweeteners, making them less nutritious than foods without protein claims. Regular consumption of such foods can contribute to adverse health outcomes, including obesity and [cardiovascular diseases](#).

The study findings are particularly crucial because consumers are often unaware of the health risks and instead perceive foods with protein claims as [healthy](#). Therefore, the authors advise that the presence of protein claims on packaging should prompt consumers to carefully check the nutrition declaration and ingredient list to make truly healthy choices.

### **Source:**

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20241215/Protein-packed-foods-may-not-be-as-healthy-as-you-think-study-finds.aspx>