Do you really need that protein shake after your workout? Probably not.

Research shows consuming ~ 20 g of protein as part of a meal or snack every three to four hours is more effective then consuming one large dose after your workout to generate new muscle fibers. There’s no doubt protein is an important part of the recovery process after an intense workout, but if you’re an average gym-goer who exercises for an hour or so a few days a week, that protein shake isn’t going to do whole lot for you. In fact, drinking a protein shake may cause you to take in more energy than your body needs, storing it as fat, and defeating your overall efforts. Instead, active gym-goers should eat protein-rich meals and snacks throughout the day.

Examples of protein-rich meals and snacks:
- Two eggs and oatmeal made with milk, or try the Protein Packed Pancakes recipe to the right (good anytime!)
- Grilled chicken with vegetables and rice
- Black beans, salsa and low-fat cheese wrapped in a whole wheat tortilla
- Snacks: Greek yogurt, string cheese, edamame, peanut butter, almonds

Bottom line: If you’re looking for convenience, protein shakes can be a good option, but they certainly aren’t magical. Consume high-quality protein throughout the day, not just after your workout!

Recipe: Protein Packed Pancakes

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
Recipe Makes: 4 pancakes
Serving Size: 2 pancakes

Ingredients:
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup low fat cottage cheese
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 egg whites
- Cooking Spray

Steps:
1. Separate egg yolks from egg whites. Add egg whites to blender.
2. Add oatmeal, cottage cheese and vanilla to blender and blend.
3. Spray Skillet with cooking spray and heat pan. Pour a little less than ¼ cup into the pan for each pancake and cook until brown on one side. Flip and cook the other side until brown.

Nutrition facts: 160 calories, 2.5 g fat, 17 g carbohydrate, 17 g protein, 2 g fiber

Guest co-author: Tiffany Doggett (Dietetics, 2016)