

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgie

And I'm Georgie. Neil, we're talking about protein today. What type of protein do you usually eat?

Neil

Well, I like all kinds of proteins – fish, bit of chicken – but I think I really like an egg. An egg is my favourite kind of protein.

Georgie

Ah, I was going to say that too. I'm a big fan of breakfast foods and eggs are my favourite.

Neil

Well, you can't beat a good breakfast! Of all the main food groups, such as carbohydrate, fat and fibre, it's protein that seems to be most in the news. In shops and on social media, you'll find all kinds of high-protein foods being advertised, from shakes and yoghurts to chocolate. Here's Ruth Alexander, presenter of BBC World Service programme The Food Chain:

Ruth Alexander

Cast your eye over most aisles in the supermarkets now and you'll see high protein products **in abundance**: pasta made with lentils and chickpeas rather than wheat flour, bread fortified with beans and pulses.

Georgie

Ruth **casts her eye over** the supermarket shelves. If you **cast your eye over** something, you take a quick look at it.

Neil

What she sees are protein products **in abundance** – in other words, in large quantities. Products which already contain protein, like yoghurt, are re-packaged as 'high-protein', while other items have extra protein added, often in the form of beans and pulses. Protein is big business!

Georgie

Our bodies need protein for health and to build muscle, but with all this focus on protein, are we forgetting about other important nutrients, such as fibre? That's what we'll be discussing in this programme, hearing some useful new words and phrases.

Neil

But first I have a question for you, Georgie. The popularity of protein started with bodybuilders and people working out in gyms, who ate extra protein to gain muscle. Irishman Patrick Callahan is a big name in the protein-muscle world, but do you know who he is? Is he:

- a) the owner of a company which makes protein shakes,
- b) the winner of the 2024 Mister Universe bodybuilding contest, or
- c) the scientist who discovered a new protein in outer space?

Georgie

Ooh, I'm going to say Patrick Callahan is the winner of the 2024 Mister Universe bodybuilding contest.

Neil

OK. We'll find out if you're right at the end. Marketing campaigns that promote sales of high-protein food are certainly working. Sales of protein products make around £7 billion globally. Here's Scott Dicker from SPINS, a market research company in Chicago, talking with BBC programme The Food Chain:

Scott Dicker

So, sometimes carbs are good; sometimes they're bad for consumers. Sometimes fat is good; sometimes it's bad for consumers. But protein seems to have this continuous **health halo** on it.

Georgie

Unlike carbs – that's carbohydrates – and fat, consumers don't see any downside to eating protein. Scott says protein has a **health halo**, a marketing term which describes perceiving a food to be healthy based on a single feature, such as being

'organic', 'gluten-free' or in this case 'high-protein', even if its overall nutritional value is poor.

Neil

Yes, food which used to be considered unhealthy is now called healthy just because a spoonful of protein powder has been added. So, could our modern obsession with protein mean that we ignore other important food groups, like fibre? NHS surgeon and blogger Dr Karan Rajan thinks so and explains why here to Ruth Alexander, on BBC World Service programme The Food Chain:

Ruth Alexander

And do you think we're paying enough attention to fibre?

Dr Karan Rajan

Historically, probably not. I think **the tide is turning**, and there's more people interested in fibre and optimising their fibre intake and **fibermaxxing** even – it's a trend on TikTok.

Ruth Alexander

What is **fibermaxxing**?

Dr Karan Rajan

Fibermaxxing is, you know, as it suggests, similar to the protein-maxing trend, where people are trying to maximise their fibre intake with little **hacks** or tricks or tips they could do, whether it's, you know, adding certain seeds or nuts to snacks.

Georgie

Many people pay more attention to protein than fibre in their diet, but Dr Karan thinks **the tide is turning** – an idiom which means that things are changing. In part, this is thanks to a new trend from America called **fibermaxxing** – consuming lots of fibre by eating fibre-rich foods and supplements for their health benefits.

Neil

Dr Karan also gives some **hacks** – good solutions or pieces of advice – to help boost your fibre intake. For example, adding seeds and nuts to meals.

Georgie

In fact, the healthiest diet is probably a balanced diet: one containing items from all the major food groups. But I'm still intrigued by your question, Neil. Isn't it time you revealed the answer?

Neil

I asked you who the Irishman Patrick Callahan was.

Georgie

And I said he was the winner of the Mister Universe contest.

Neil

And you were correct.

Georgie

Yay!

Neil

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this episode. If you **cast your eye over** something, you have a quick look at it.

Georgie

If something is **in abundance**, there's a lot or more than enough of it.

Neil

A **health halo** refers to overestimating how healthy an item is based on a single feature, such as being low in calories, gluten-free or high in protein.

Georgie

The idiom **the tide is turning** means that things are changing.

Neil

The trend **fibermaxxing** means people intentionally consume lots of fibre by eating fibre-rich foods and supplements for their health benefits.

Georgie

And finally, a **hack** is a good solution or piece of advice. Once again, our six minutes are up but here's another **hack** for you – remember you can find worksheets, quizzes and loads more resources to improve your English over on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. See you there soon, but for now it's goodbye!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

cast your eye over (something)

look quickly at (something)

in abundance

in large quantities; more than enough

health halo

consumer perception of food which overestimates how healthy an item is based on a single feature – such as being low in calories, organic or high in protein – even if its overall nutritional value is poor

the tide is turning

(idiom) things are beginning to change

fibermaxxing

American social media trend where people intentionally consume high levels of fibre by eating fibre-rich foods and supplements for their health benefits

hack

a good solution or piece of advice