Best to eat a mix of animal and plant proteins

It is not hard to fill up on proteins as both animal and plant foods contain the macronutrient, which is made of basic building blocks called amino acids. But not all proteins are created equal: some contain more amino acids than others.

Professor Stuart Phillips from the Department of Kinesiology and Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo, Canada, who was recently in Singapore for a symposium, said a variety of animal and plant protein would be the best way.

The general rule is that animal protein tends to be better quality as it has more essential amino acids and it is more digestible than plant protein, he said.

“Having said that, I would never say no to plant-based diets – people can do very well with that diet, only that you have to be a bit more intentional about making sure you get all the necessary amino acids and how you complement your proteins.”

Eating a lot of animal proteins can also become an issue.

“For example, if you are more meat-oriented, that means lots of saturated fats and cholesterol,” said Prof Phillips.

Dr Chew, a senior consultant at the department of geriatric medicine at Changi General Hospital, said both meat and plant proteins help older people build muscle mass, provided they are consumed in the right amounts and frequently enough.

“This means consuming 20g to 30g of protein per meal at least three times a day. A 30g portion of lean chicken breast or soy beans can provide 30g of protein while a 30g serving of tofu provides 20g of protein. A range of plant-based protein is available in the market, at supermarkets and even in the workplace. Dr Chew said people could lean on his website on My Healthy Plate guide recommendations to derive three servings of palm-sized piece (90g) of fish, lean meat or thin slices protein, or two small blocks of heart card (150g), or 1/2 cup or 100g of cooked pulses such as kidney, pinto beans or sources of protein.

Dr Chew said one serving size will provide enough protein for a young adult weighing 80kg, but not quite enough for an older person of the same weight. A younger, older or very old person can have a chronic illness, or if he is actively taking part in resistance training, then he will need more protein.

Those servings of the recommended protein food sources are enough, he said.

The good news: prostate cancer is the early stage is usually caused by surgery or radiation. In some cases, the disease is localized with low Gleason grade used to stage prostate cancer, patients can expect a survival rate of more than 95 per cent of five years.

SCREENING EARLY CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Another cancer common amongst men – and with no early symptoms – is prostate cancer.

In up to 25 per cent of lung cancer cases, there are no symptoms and the earlier stages when the patient may experience breathlessness, a hoarse voice, chest pain and constant coughing. Depending on the stage it is at, lung cancer can be treated with surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy or a combination of the above.

Smoking is the major risk factor for lung cancer in Singaporean men. In its latest report in 2018, the Singapore Cancer Society estimated that since 2003, smoking rates have dropped by 20 to 25 per cent in men who are chronic heavy smokers.

There are studies to show that screening CT scan of the chest will reduce the risk of lung cancer related mortality by 20 to 25 per cent in men who are chronic heavy smokers.

The third most common cancer affecting men is colorectal cancer, which generally begins as a non-cancerous polyp that sometimes turns into a malignant tumor.

This is why early screening, which includes colonoscopy, is important because it can detect and remove polyps before they become cancerous.

Dr Chew, who is a clinical assistant professor in internal medicine at the National University of Singapore also recommended oral FIT test and a colonoscopy screening every five years from the age of 50.