This opinion of the EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA) deals with the setting of Dietary Reference Values (DRVs) for protein. The Panel concludes that a Population Reference Intake (PRI) can be derived from nitrogen balance studies. Several health outcomes possibly associated with protein intake were also considered but data were found to be insufficient to establish DRVs. For healthy adults of both sexes, the average requirement (AR) is 0.66 g protein/kg body weight per day based on nitrogen balance data. Considering the 97.5th percentile of the distribution of the requirement and assuming an efficiency of utilisation of dietary protein for maintenance of 47 %, the PRI for adults of all ages was estimated to be 0.83 g protein/kg body weight per day and is applicable both to high quality protein and to protein in mixed diets. For children from six months onwards, age-dependent requirements for growth estimated from average daily rates of protein deposition and adjusted by a protein efficiency for growth of 58 % were added to the requirement for maintenance of 0.66 g/kg body weight per day. The PRI was estimated based on the average requirement plus 1.96 SD using a combined SD for growth and maintenance. For pregnancy, an intake of 1, 9 and 28 g/d in the first, second and third trimesters, respectively, is proposed in addition to the PRI for non-pregnant women. For lactation, a protein intake of 19 g/d during the first six months, and of 13 g/d after six months, is proposed in addition to the PRI for non-lactating women. Data are insufficient to establish a Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL) for protein. Intakes up to twice the PRI are regularly consumed from mixed diets by some physically active and healthy adults in Europe and are considered safe.

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