

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Proteins

Proteins may be defined as compounds of high molar mass consisting largely or entirely of chains of amino acids. Their masses range from several thousand to several million daltons (Da). In addition to carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms, all proteins contain nitrogen and sulfur atoms, and many also contain phosphorus atoms and traces of other elements. Proteins serve a variety of roles in living organisms and are often classified by these biological roles. Muscle tissue is largely protein, as are skin and hair. Proteins are present in the blood, in the brain, and even in tooth enamel. Each type of cell in our bodies makes its own specialized proteins, as well as proteins common to all or most cells. We begin our study of proteins by looking at the properties and reactions of amino acids, which is followed by a discussion of how amino acids link covalently to form peptides and proteins. We end the chapter with a discussion of enzymes—the proteins that act as catalysts in the body.

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