

Increasing Protein in Your Diet

Why do I need more protein in my diet?

At times when your appetite is low, or when your body is under stress, you may need more protein in the foods you are eating to maintain your muscle and lean body mass. Protein is a nutrient essential for growth, healing, and maintenance of tissue, skin, hair, and nails. However, protein isn't the only nutrient to eat. Carbohydrates and fats are important to eat as well to be used for energy, so that the protein that you do eat can be used for building muscle. Protein needs vary among individuals, so ask your dietitian what your protein goal is.

What foods contain higher amounts of protein?

All animal meats, soy foods (such as tofu and tempeh), eggs, dairy, nuts and beans contain protein. On the other hand, fruits, vegetables and fats do not contribute much protein to the diet.

What does one serving of protein look like?

1 ounce of meat = size of a matchbox

3 ounces of meat = size of a deck of cards










1 ounce of cheese = size of 4 dice

2 Tbsp. of peanut butter = size of a ping pong ball

½ cup of beans = ½ size of a computer mouse

Visual reminder chart for portion sizes:

Below is a chart so you can remember what portion sizes look like using the size of your hand and common objects.

Hand Reminder	Visual Reminder	Food
<p>Small Fist</p> 		<p>1 cup of cooked rice, pasta, other grains 1 medium potato 1 medium fruit, 12 baby carrots 1 cup of yogurt</p>
<p>Medium Size Palm</p> 		<p>3 ounces of meat, fish, poultry, tofu 1 slice of cake</p>
<p>Small Handful</p> 		<p>2 tablespoons of peanut butter 2 tablespoons of hummus 1/4 cup of dried fruit 1/4 cup of nuts</p>
<p>Thumb Tip</p> 		<p>1 teaspoon of oil, butter, salad dressing, mayonnaise</p>
<p>Length of Thumb</p> 		<p>1 ounce of cheese</p>
		<p>1 ounce of lunch meat 1 waffle 1 pancake</p>
		<p>2 oz of dry spaghetti, fettucine, etc. that makes 1 cup of cooked pasta</p>

How do I calculate how many grams of protein are in a serving?

1 ounce of protein food contains 7 grams of protein (on average)

For example:

1 ounce of meat has 7 grams of protein

4 ounces of meat has 28 grams of protein (4 ounces x 7 grams=28 grams)

Types of common animal-based and plant-based protein sources:

Protein Source	Grams of Protein	Vegetarian Equivalent
3 ounces of chicken, beef or turkey	21	3/4 cup of Boca® Meatless Ground burger
4 ounce hamburger	28	1 ½ cup of firm tofu
1 hotdog with bun	10	½ cup of cooked lentils
1 egg or ¼ egg substitute	7	1 cup of cooked oatmeal
4 ounces of fish	28	1 cup of tempeh or ½ cup of seitan
8 ounces of milk	8	8 ounces of soy milk
1 ounce of cheese	7	2 tablespoons peanut butter
½ cup cottage cheese	14	1 cup pinto beans
¼ cup of almonds	6	¼ cup sunflower seeds
6 ounces yogurt	6	6 ounces soy yogurt
1/3 cup dry milk powder	8	1 cup cooked peas or 1 cup cooked quinoa or 1 cup Greek yogurt

What about protein powders?

Whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolate and soy protein powders have become a popular protein source for people trying to improve athletic performance and build muscle mass. For some patients, they can provide necessary protein to the diet and help maintain muscle tissue during

treatments when experiencing a lack of appetite for eating meats or other high protein foods.

Warning: Avoid adding too much protein powder to foods and beverages as excessive protein in the diet can be harmful. Ask your dietitian how much protein you should be eating daily.

Type of Protein	Description
Whey protein concentrate	- a very common and most affordable form of whey - contains some lactose
Whey protein isolate	- more concentrated form of whey protein with little to no fat or lactose - acceptable protein source for people on a lactose restricted diet or with lactose intolerance
Soy protein powder	- comes in either soy protein isolate or soy protein concentrate - do not dissolve as well - may have a beany taste and can cause gas to people sensitive to soy sugars

How to add protein powders to your diet:

Check the label on the can for how much protein is provided per scoop. It can range from 16-20 or more grams per scoop.

- Mix it into your favorite beverage, oral supplement or smoothie or add it to a variety of soft foods to increase the protein content.
- Use it as an egg replacement in baked goods and cooked items such as pancakes, omelets, breads and oatmeal.

Tips for how to include protein foods in your diet daily:

Make every bite and sip count when possible!

Hard or Semi-soft Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melt on sandwiches, breads, tortillas, hamburgers, hot dogs, other meats or fish, vegetables, eggs, or desserts such as stewed fruits or pies. • Grate and add to soups, sauces, casseroles, vegetable dishes, mashed potatoes, rice, noodles, or meat loaf.
Cottage Cheese or Ricotta Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix with or use to stuff fruits and vegetables. • Add to casseroles, spaghetti, noodles, and egg dishes such as omelets, scrambled eggs, and soufflés. • Use in gelatin, pudding-type desserts, cheesecake, and pancake batter. <p>Use to stuff crepes or manicotti.</p>
Milk or Soy Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use in beverages, cooking, hot cereals, soups, cocoas, and puddings in place of water. • Add cream sauces to vegetables and other dishes.
Powdered Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to regular milk and milk drinks, such as pasteurized eggnog and milkshakes (add ¼ cup of powder to every 1 cup of liquid). • Use in casseroles, meatloaf, breads, muffins, sauces, cream soups, mashed potatoes, puddings, custards, and milk-based desserts.
Oral Nutrition Supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Carnation Breakfast Essentials® in milks and desserts. Mix oral supplements with ice cream, milk, fruit or flavorings (chocolate or strawberry syrup) for a high-protein milkshake.
Ice Cream, Frozen Yogurt, and Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to carbonated beverages, like ginger ale; add to milk to make a shake. • Add to cereals, fruits, gelatin, and pies; blend or whip with soft or cooked fruits. • Sandwich ice cream or frozen yogurt between pound cake, cookies, or graham crackers.

Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add chopped, hard-cooked eggs to salads and dressings, vegetables, casseroles, and meat salads. • Add extra eggs or egg whites to quiches, pancakes, and French Toast. Add extra egg whites to scrambled eggs and omelets. Egg whites and Egg Beaters® are a great way to add protein without saturated fat or cholesterol. • Make a rich custard with eggs, milk, and sugar. • Add extra hard-cooked yolks to deviled-egg filling and sandwich spreads. • If you would like to use a raw egg product, such as in homemade eggnog, use Egg Beaters® egg substitute, which is pasteurized. (Do not eat raw eggs, which contain harmful bacteria, and make sure all eggs are cooked well).
Nuts, Seeds, Wheat Germ, and Oats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to casseroles, breads, muffins, pancakes, cookies, and waffles. • Sprinkle on fruit, cereal, ice cream, yogurt, vegetables, salads, and toast as a crunchy topping; use in place of bread crumbs. • Blend with parsley or spinach, herbs, and cream for a noodle, pasta, or vegetable sauce. • Roll a banana in chopped nuts. Blend oats in with a smoothie or shake.
Peanut Butter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a spread on sandwiches, toast, muffins, crackers, waffles, pancakes, and fruit slices. • Use as a dip for raw vegetables such as carrots and celery. • Blend with milk drinks and beverages, such as shakes and smoothies. • Swirl through soft ice cream and yogurt.
Meat and Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add chopped, cooked meat or fish to vegetables, salads, casseroles, soups, sauces, and biscuit dough. • Use in omelets, soufflés, quiches, sandwich fillings, and chicken and turkey stuffing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap in pie crust or biscuit dough as turnovers. • Add to stuffed baked potatoes. • Make tuna fish sandwiches or salad
Beans and Legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook and use dried peas, legumes, beans, and tofu in soups, or add to casseroles, pastas, and grain dishes that also contain cheese and meat. • Use baked and refried beans alone or in different dishes • Hummus is a high protein spread that can be used on carrots, or bread.

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Reviewed By: Nutrition Education Materials Task Force

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