

THE SCOOP ON PROTEIN

Protein is a nutrient found in many types of foods. It's vital for life. Any time your body is growing or repairing itself, protein is needed.

Protein helps fight infection. It also carries fats, vitamins, minerals and oxygen around the body, builds and contracts muscles, keeps body fluids in balance and clots blood.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN?

How much you need depends on several factors, including:

- age
- sex
- health status
- activity level

For general recommendations by age, view the table at <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/protein-foods>.

Find the right amount for you by getting your [MyPlate Plan](#).



NUTRITIOUS PROTEIN FOODS

Meat, poultry and eggs: lean cuts of beef, lamb, goat, pork loin, skinless chicken and turkey, quail, duck

Fish and seafood: salmon, tuna, cod, shrimp, mackerel, lobster, catfish, crab

Low-fat or fat-free dairy foods: yogurt, milk, cheese, cottage cheese

Legumes: beans, split peas, lentils, soy

Nuts and seeds: walnuts, almonds, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, pistachios, cashews, peanuts

LIMIT THESE FOODS

Foods rich in protein may also be high in saturated fat. High intakes of saturated fat may increase your risk for heart disease. Limit protein foods that are high in saturated fats, such as:

Meats and poultry: bacon, chicken fried steak, chorizo sausage, fried chicken, hot dogs, lunch meats, organ meats, processed meats, sausage and spare ribs

Fish and shellfish: breaded and fried options

Whole-fat dairy: whole milk and other whole-fat dairy products

CAN YOU GET ENOUGH PROTEIN FROM FOOD?

Most people can get enough protein from their diet.

Unless you're an older adult with a limited appetite, have a restricted diet or are a trained professional athlete, chances are you can adjust your food intake to get what you need.

Protein from food is often cheaper, less risky and naturally includes beneficial nutrients.

If increasing protein through your diet is not an option, taking a supplement can be effective and convenient.

SHOULD YOU USE SUPPLEMENTS?

Protein powders are convenient, but unnecessary for most. Older adults may benefit from increasing protein slightly, regardless of their exercise routine; however, for most of us, resistance training is more effective than simply supplementing with protein.

If supplements are used, click [here](#) to learn how to choose the best protein powder for you.

Read about the [risks of consuming protein powders](#) and speak with your doctor before using any supplements.