

# Protein

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you set specific nutrition goals and guide you in planning a personalized healthy eating pattern.

To find an RDN in your area, visit "Find an Expert" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)



Protein, a nutrient found in both animal and plant foods, is vital for life. Recently, protein has been getting more attention for its role in managing weight, building and repairing muscle after workouts, and preserving muscle and bone as you age. Read on to learn more about why you need protein, how to be sure you're getting the right amount, and the many foods that supply protein.

## Why You Need Protein

The body needs a regular supply of protein to make and repair cells. Protein is made up of amino acids, which are combined in the body to form different proteins that have many important functions. For example, proteins are part of enzymes and hormones, help defend against infection, assist with muscle contraction, and more. Eating meals and snacks that contain protein also helps to satisfy your appetite and may help keep your blood sugar stable.

## Getting the Right Amount of Protein




The amount of protein you should get from your food choices depends on your age, sex, and how active you are. A healthy amount of daily protein is about 10% to 35% of your total calorie needs.

- Most adults should aim for at least the midpoint of this range.
- Athletes' needs may be at the high end of the range, depending on their level of activity.
- The range for children (4 to 18 years) is about 10% to 30% of total calories.

The following chart offers ranges of daily protein amounts for different calorie levels, based on 10% to 35% of daily calories from protein.

Daily Calories	Protein Per Day
1,600	40–140 grams
2,000	50–175 grams
2,400	60–210 grams

Use this daily food group advice as a guide to help meet your energy, protein, and other nutrient needs.

	1,600 calories	2,000 calories	2,400 calories
<b>Protein Foods</b>			
 5 ounces	5 ounces	5 ½ ounces	6 ounces
<b>Dairy</b>			
 3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
<b>Grains</b>			
 5 ounces	5 ounces	6 ounces	7 ounces
<b>Vegetables</b>			
 2 cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	3 cups
<b>Fruits</b>			
 1 ½ cups	1 ½ cups	2 cups	2 cups

Source: 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans



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