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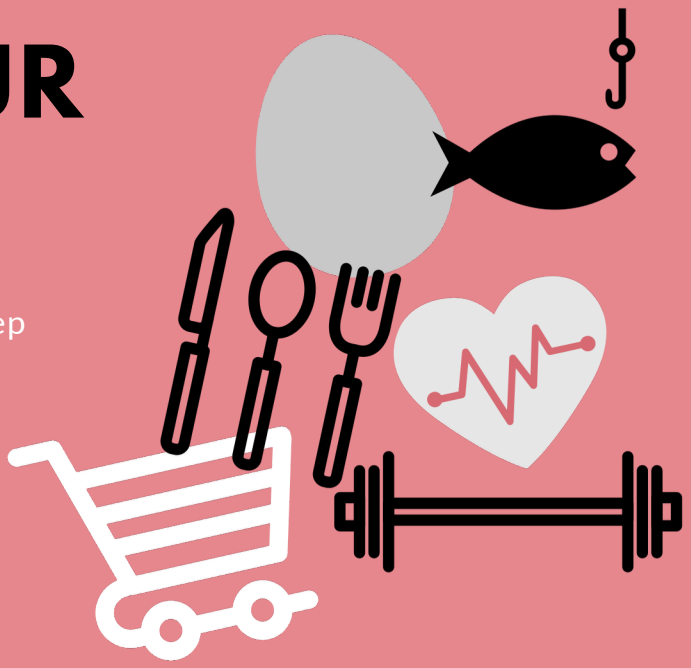
CHOOSING YOUR PROTEIN

Protein is important for our bodies to function optimally, but not all protein is created equal. Keep reading to learn more about why we need protein and get ideas on protein your body will love.

by Ashley Sineath, MPH



WHY WE NEED PROTEIN:

1 BUILDING BLOCKS

Protein is essential for building up your bones, muscles, and skin. They also help build healthy enzymes and hormones. We need protein to have strong bodies inside and out!

2 SOURCE OF B-VITAMINS

These vitamins pack a big punch as they help release energy and builda healthy nervous system! B-vitamins also help your blood form red blood cells. They help your body perform essential every day functions.

3 PREVENT DISEASE

The right type of protein can help reduce your risk of heart disease. Also, did you know swapping lean protein for fatty protein can help ward off hypertension and high cholesterol?

4 IRON, ZINC, MAGNESIUM

Iron is an important vitamin found in protein. It helps carry oxygen throughout your blood stream! Zinc is another important vitamin that helps keep your immune system healthy. Magnesium is a third vitamin found in protein that helps build up your bones along with other functions.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN:

Think through the lens of making a "swap." You can start with swapping leaner meats for processed fatty meats. Keep in mind that the way you prepare your protein is important, baked or grilled is better than fried or breaded!

Some examples of lean meat and nut-based protein sources are below:

Meal Planning Ideas

1 BREAKFAST

- Two scrambled eggs or egg whites
- Turkey or chicken sausage
- Turkey bacon
- Nut butter (i.e. peanut or almond butter) on whole grain toast or with fruit
- Hardboiled egg

2 LUNCH

- Grilled or baked chicken tenders
- Low sodium deli turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread
- Peanut butter and jam sandwich on whole wheat bread (swap fresh fruit for jam to try something new!)

3 DINNER

- Grilled or Baked Chicken
- Grilled or Baked Fish (i.e. salmon or tilapia)
- Try ground bison or ground turkey in:
  - Spaghetti or Lasagna
  - Tacos
  - Burgers
  - Chili

Sources:
MyPlate

CHOOSING YOUR PROTEIN II



Protein only comes from animals right? Think again! Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to get protein from a variety of sources. Check out a few of the ideas below to mix up your protein intake.

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MORE PROTEIN SOURCES:

1 BUILD AROUND BEANS

Beans can serve as a great source of protein and fiber. A few types that are high in protein include: soybeans (edamame), navy beans, black beans, lentils, or pinto beans. You can eat them plain, mix with rice, drop them in soup, or just enjoy them on the side.

2 GET YOUR GREENS

In addition to the many vitamins and minerals green vegetables offer, they provide some protein as well. Spinach and peas are two examples of vegetables with 5 and 8 grams of protein respectively.

3 LOW FAT DAIRY

Did youknowthat dairy products can be a good source of protein? Items like greek yogurt (watch the sugar) or low-fat chocolate milk can serve as a solid source of dietary protein.

4 NUTS AND SEEDS

Foods like almonds and cashews make a great alternative to animal protein. These nuts are also a source of healthy fat. Make sure and monitor your portions as they can be high in calories. You can also get protein from seeds like sunflower seeds, pumpkin, or chia seeds.

Sources:
MyPlate

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN:

Beyond the traditional animal proteins, there are a variety of recipes and meals you can make that will help you get your protein.

Meal Planning Ideas

1 BREAKFAST

- Two scrambled eggs or egg whites
- Fruit smoothie with yogurt
- Soy sausage patties or links
- Soy or Almond Milk in cereal
- Nut butter on whole grain toast with fruit
- Greek yogurt with low fat granola
- Omelet with mozzarella and spinach
- Oatmeal with peanut butter and chia seeds

2 LUNCH

- Peanut butter and jam sandwich on whole wheat bread
- Black bean or veggie burger
- Spinach salad topped with nuts, fruit, and low fat cheese
- Sampler Plate: Hard boiled egg, carrots & hummus, fruit, and pasta salad

3 DINNER

- Veggie pasta with marinara sauce - Veggies on a whole grain pizza crust and mozzarella cheese
- Grilled vegetable kabobs
- Black bean burritos or tacos
- Stir fry with brown rice, edamame, and vegetables

OTHER SOURCES:

- Hummus (try withcut veggies or pita chips)
- Quinoa (high protein grain, similar to rice)
- Tofu (soy product)