

# PROTEIN

**An Important Building Block.** Protein is an essential macronutrient that is used to make our muscles, bones, skin, and cartilage. It's also used in critical body processes like creating antibodies to prevent illness, carrying oxygen throughout the body, and supporting metabolism.

**Part of a Balanced Meal.** All meals should contain a mix of protein, carbohydrates, and fat. Protein supplements are typically unnecessary for most people, as protein needs can easily be met through foods.

## How Many Grams (g) of Protein Do You Need Every Day?

The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) is 0.8 g protein/kg body weight. This works out to about:

50 pounds	75 pounds	100 pounds	125 pounds	150 pounds	175 pounds	200 pounds	225 pounds	250 pounds	300 pounds
18 g	27 g	36 g	45 g	54 g	63 g	72 g	81 g	90 g	108 g

*Adults ages 65+, women in their 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy, lactating women, and elite athletes may benefit from higher amounts of protein than those listed above. Talk to your healthcare team if any of these situations apply to you to make sure your protein intake is adequate.*

Source: RDA, Dietary Reference Intakes, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, National Academies

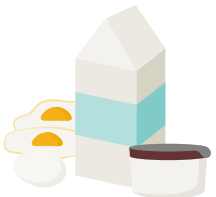
## Meeting Your Protein Needs



**Reach for beans, nuts, and soy foods.** Although protein is found in meat and seafood, there are an abundant number of protein sources in the plant kingdom as well. Beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, soy foods, nuts, and seeds are the most common sources of plant-protein. Make sure that one of these foods is included on your plate at every meal and snack.



**No need to “complete.”** Nutrition guidance used to recommend that vegetarians “complete” their protein by pairing beans (which are limiting in the amino acid methionine but have excess lysine) with grains (which are limiting in the amino acid lysine, but have excess methionine). Today, we know that the body stores excess amino acids, so a balanced diet which includes a variety of beans, whole grains, soy foods, nuts, and seeds throughout the day is enough to ensure good nutrition.



**Dairy and eggs can boost protein, too.** For lacto-ovo vegetarians, protein is also found in yogurt (especially Greek yogurt), cheese, and eggs. Soy milk has a comparable protein level with cow's milk, but most other alternative milks (almond milk, rice milk, etc.) do not.

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## Vegan Sources of Protein



Lentils  
Serving: 1 cup, cooked  
**Protein: 18 g**



Tempeh  
Serving: 3 ounces  
**Protein: 17 g**



Tofu, firm  
Serving: 3 ounces  
**Protein: 15 g**



Black Beans  
Serving: 1 cup, cooked  
**Protein: 15 g**



Chickpeas  
Serving: 1 cup, cooked  
**Protein: 11 g**



Soy Milk, original  
Serving: 1 cup  
**Protein: 8 g**



Almonds  
Serving: 1/4 cup  
**Protein: 7 g**



Peanut Butter  
Serving: 2 tablespoons  
**Protein: 7 g**

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## Vegetarian Sources of Protein



Greek Yogurt, plain  
Serving: 1 cup  
**Protein: 22 g**



Cheese,  
Parmigiano-Reggiano  
Serving: 1 ounce  
**Protein: 9 g**



Eggs  
Serving: 1 whole, large  
**Protein: 6 g**

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, FoodData Central. Available from <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/>.