

Nutrition Guidelines: Protein

Protein is found in animal products such as dairy, meat, poultry, and in some vegetables and legumes such as peanut butter, beans and nuts.

Why is Protein Important?

Protein is important during all stages of cancer treatment, recovery, and long-term survival. Protein is needed for digestion and the growth and repair of your muscles, bones, skin, tendons, ligaments, hair, eyes and other tissues. Protein intake can also affect the levels of albumin, which is a protein that your liver makes. Albumin can help prevent swelling (edema) and it transports hormones and medication through the blood stream.

How Much Protein Do I Need?

On average, it is recommended that most adults eat 60-100 grams of protein each day. Children usually need less protein than adults. These numbers are based on your weight and may change based on your current treatment plan.

Examples of Foods High in Protein

Food	Amount of Protein (grams)
Meat (3 ounces)	21 g
Poultry (3 ounces)	21 g
Fish (3 ounces)	21 g
Tofu (1/2 cup)	20 g
Egg (1 egg)	7 g
Egg Beaters [®] (1/4 cup)	6 g
Milk, regular and soy (8 ounces)	8 g
Milk, Kefir (8 ounces)	10 g
Yogurt, Greek (6 ounces)	14 g
Yogurt, regular (6 ounces)	7 g
Cheese, hard and soft (1 ounce)	6 – 10 g
Cottage Cheese (1/2 cup)	14 g
Quinoa (1 cup, cooked)	8 g
Peanut Butter (2 tablespoons)	8 g
Legumes (1/2 cup)	7 g
Seeds (1/4 cup)	6 g
Nuts (1/4 cup)	5 g

Tips on How to Increase Protein in the Diet

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. • Wrap in pie crust or biscuit dough as turnovers. • Add to stuffed baked potatoes.
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add chopped, hard-cooked eggs to salads and dressings, vegetables, casseroles, and creamed meats. • Add extra eggs or egg whites to quiches and to pancake and French toast batter. • Add extra egg whites to scrambled eggs and omelets. • Make custard with eggs, high-protein milk (see recipe on last page), and sugar. • Add extra hard-cooked yolks to deviled-egg filling and sandwich spreads. • Add pasteurized liquid eggs such as Egg beaters® to shakes • Avoid raw eggs, which may contain harmful bacteria, because your treatment may make you susceptible to infection. Make sure all eggs you eat are well cooked or baked; avoid eggs that are undercooked.
Milk/Soy milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use milk instead of water in beverages and in cooking when possible. • Use in preparing hot cereal, soups, cocoa, and pudding. • Add cream sauces to vegetables and other dishes. • Make milk-based smoothies.
Nonfat Instant Dry Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to regular milk and milk drinks, such as pasteurized eggnog and milkshakes. • Use in casseroles, meatloaf, breads, muffins, sauces, cream soups, mashed potatoes, puddings and custards, and milk-based desserts.
Yogurt, Kefir products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a base for smoothies and add fruit. • Eat as a snack between meals. • Add granola, nuts, seeds, and fresh fruit. • Use to make dips and sauces.
Ice Cream and Frozen Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to carbonated beverages, such as ginger ale or cola. • Add to milk drinks, such as milkshakes. • Add to cereal, fruit, gelatin desserts, and pies - blend or whip with soft or cooked fruits. • Sandwich ice cream or frozen yogurt between cake slices, cookies, or graham crackers.
Hard or Semisoft Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melt on sandwiches, bread, muffins, tortillas, hamburgers, hot dogs, other meats or fish, vegetables, eggs, desserts, stewed fruit, or pies. • Grate and add to soups, sauces, casseroles, vegetables, potatoes, rice, and noodles.
Cottage Cheese/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. • Use to stuff crepes and pasta shells or manicotti.

Grains containing protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose grains that naturally contain protein such as quinoa, tempeh, seitan, bulgur, couscous, amaranth, and kaniwa.
Peanut Butter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread on sandwiches, toast, muffins, crackers, waffles, pancakes, and fruit slices. • Use as a dip for raw vegetables, such as carrots, cauliflower, and celery. • Blend with milk drinks and beverages. • Swirl through soft ice cream and yogurt.
Beans/Legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook and use peas, legumes, beans, and tofu in soups or add to casseroles, pastas, and grain dishes that also contain cheese or meat. Mash cooked beans with cheese and milk.
Nuts, Seeds, and Wheat Germ	<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 breadcrumbs. • Blend with parsley or spinach, herbs, and cream for a noodle, pasta, or vegetable sauce. • Roll banana in chopped nuts.
Commercial Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use "instant breakfast" powder in milk drinks and desserts. • Mix with ice cream, milk, and fruit or flavorings for a high-protein milkshake.
Protein/ Nutrition Supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your healthcare team if a commercial protein supplement (such as Pro-Stat[®], Unjury[®] or Beneprotein[®]) is right for you • If you are not able to reach the recommended goal, your healthcare team may suggest a nutritional drink such as Boost[®], Ensure[®], or Pediasure[®].

Recipe for High Protein Milk

Ingredients: 1 quart milk, 1 cup instant non-fat dried milk

Pour milk into a deep bowl or blender. Add non-fat dried milk. Beat slowly with beater until dry milk is dissolved. Refrigerate. The flavor improves if left overnight. Makes 1 quart.

Try to add high protein milk when making:

- Macaroni and cheese
- Puddings and custards
- Cream sauces for vegetables
- Mashed potatoes
- Cocoa
- French toast or pancake batter
- Cream soups

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.