



Protein Content of Meat & Meat Alternatives



Protein, vital to the structure, function, and regulation of the body's tissues and organs, is made up of amino acids. Your body can make some amino acids on its own, but others are essential, meaning they must come from food.

Plant sources of protein may be missing one or more essential amino acid while animal sources tend to be complete, meaning they contain all of the essential amino acids*.

Simply combine legumes (beans and lentils) with whole grains to create a complete protein.

How much protein do you need every day?

According to the DGA's**, women need 46 grams of protein and men need 56 grams of protein every day, though this varies depending on how active you are. A good rule of thumb is to **aim for about 20 grams of protein per meal**.

Meat Alternative, Serving Size	Grams of Protein per Serving	vs.	Meat, Serving Size	Grams of Protein per Serving
Tofu, firm, ½ cup	20 g		Sirloin, 3 oz.	24 g
Yogurt, 1 cup	14 g		Pork Loin, 3 oz.	23 g
Pumpkin Seeds, 1 oz.	9 g		Salmon, 3 oz.	21 g
Black Beans, ½ cup	8 g		Tuna, canned, 3 oz.	18 g
Milk, 1 cup	8 g		Chicken Breast, 3 oz.	13 g
Peanut Butter, 2 tbsp.	8 g			
Egg, 1 large	7 g			
Cheese, 1 slice (1 oz.)	7 g			

***Remember:** Just because a food is a complete protein, does not mean it is healthier than a non-complete protein. The other nutrients making up the protein food ultimately determines the quality. Animal proteins tend to be higher in saturated fat, sodium, and other unfavorable nutrients. Plant proteins tend to be higher in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Choosing healthy proteins can reduce your risk of some chronic diseases.

**Dietary Guidelines for Americans

References:

1. High Protein Client Ed. Nutrition Care Manual. https://www.nutritioncaremanual.org/client_ed.cfm?ncm_client_ed_id=146. Accessed December 6, 2017.
2. Vegetarian & Vegan Diet. Oldways. <https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/vegetarian-vegan-diet>. Accessed December 6, 2017.
3. Sampat S. A Guide to Protein Serving Sizes. EatingWell. <http://www.eatingwell.com/article/290412/a-guide-to-protein-serving-sizes/>. Published August 21, 2017. Accessed December 6, 2017.
4. Protein. Harvard School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/protein/>. Published February 27, 2017. Accessed December 6, 2017.