

# Protein Can Help Each Day

## Get the Most Mileage From Your Food Choices

Are you getting the most mileage from your food choices? If you lead a busy lifestyle, like most Americans, you will likely appreciate help getting the most nutrition and benefits from your meals and snacks. Protein is an important part of optimizing nutrition throughout the day.

Do you tend to eat the majority of your protein at dinner? Many experts suggest it may be better to spread out protein containing foods more evenly across meals and snacks to reap benefits associated with **higher protein diets**.

Think of proteins as tiny workers that are necessary for virtually every activity in the body. There is a limited store of protein for the body to pull from and use throughout the day. That is why spacing out balanced meals and snacks that contain high-quality protein helps your body put protein to work.

### FAQ:

#### Why is protein important throughout the day?

Protein is an essential nutrient your body uses throughout the day. From helping you curb your hunger to helping with weight management and preserving lean body muscle, diets higher in protein can help power your path to health and wellness.

– For more information on protein basics, see **Protein: Understanding the Basics**.

#### What are good sources of protein from the dairy group?

Dairy foods naturally contain high-quality, complete protein.

- Milk, flavored milk, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt and Greek-style yogurt are good examples of foods with high-quality protein.\* Dairy's protein will be present regardless of the type or variety of dairy product you choose, such as milk, cheese or yogurt (e.g., regular, low-fat, fat-free, reduced-sodium, lactose-free, etc.).
- Whey protein, a high-quality milk protein, also can help people meet their protein needs.



### Breakfast – what should I eat for the most important meal of the day?

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, because it's time to refuel the body after a night's sleep. Increasing protein intake at breakfast, which is typically lower in protein than other meals, may help you optimize the benefits of protein. Eating foods that contain protein as part of a balanced breakfast not only helps break the all-night fast but also gets you started on the right path for the day.

### Did You Know?

- Getting enough protein in your diet over the course of the day, as part of a **diet higher in protein**, may help in weight management by helping you:
  - Maintain muscle during weight loss, when following a higher protein, reduced-calorie diet.
  - Feel satisfied longer between meals.
- Americans tend to consume more protein at lunch and dinner, but less protein at other parts of the day, such as breakfast and snack time.
  - By spreading out high-quality protein throughout the day, at meals and snacks, you can help your body get the most from its protein all day.
  - An 8-ounce glass of milk, 1-ounce of most cheeses and an 8-ounce container of yogurt each have as much protein as one egg.
- In addition to protein, dairy foods (milk, cheese and yogurt) are important sources of calcium, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, vitamins A, D and B<sub>12</sub> and riboflavin in the U.S. diet.





## Tips for getting more protein on the go

Including dairy in your between-meal snacks can be a great way to help you achieve a higher protein diet. Diets higher in protein can help you curb hunger. Try these tips for snacking on the go with dairy:\*\*

- Yogurt containers are perfectly sized to stash in your backpack, briefcase or purse on the way out the door, and you can put yogurt in the fridge at work for later or eat it once you arrive at your destination.†
- Choose milk as a snack choice because of its versatility, nutrition and convenience. Plus, one 8-ounce glass of milk has as much protein as a handful of nuts.
- Portion out chunks or slices of cheese;† they will be ready to eat anytime and anywhere – plus, who doesn't love cheese?
- Add dairy protein such as whey protein, a protein naturally found in milk, to your favorite foods and beverages for a protein boost.

## Should I be concerned about getting too much protein?

The Institute of Medicine recommends that 10 to 35 percent of total daily calories should come from protein. That's about 50 to 175 grams per day if you normally eat about 2,000 calories each day. Although most people meet minimum protein requirements (i.e., the low end of this recommended range), many may benefit from a moderately higher protein intake, such as active individuals and older adults. Some experts suggest that you may benefit from consuming approximately 20 to 30 grams of high-quality protein at each meal. But please remember to check with your doctor or registered dietitian before making changes to your diet and/or exercise routine.

– Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, LDN, CSSD, Director of Sports Nutrition, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

**Myth:** Only younger people need to worry about getting enough protein.

**Fact:** No matter your age, your body needs to replenish its protein stores each day. In fact, **diets higher in protein** can help you maintain muscle to help stay active as you age.

**Myth:** Protein only comes from meat.

**Fact:** Protein sources include meat, poultry or fish; milk, cheese and yogurt; eggs, beans and tofu; and nuts, seeds and peanut butter. Find out more about sources of high-quality protein from **Protein: Understanding the Basics**.

➤ From **healthy muscles to healthy bodies** to learning how to pick the best **options for meatless meals to managing weight and controlling hunger**, diets higher in protein can help you meet health and wellness goals. Get recipes that include protein at [wheyprotein.nationaldairyCouncil.org](http://wheyprotein.nationaldairyCouncil.org) and [nationaldairyCouncil.org](http://nationaldairyCouncil.org).

\*Look for products containing 5 grams or more of protein per serving.

\*\*Choose low-fat or fat-free milk and yogurt and lower fat varieties of cheese.

†Check the label for proper refrigeration for yogurt and soft cheeses.