

Protein and Your Kidney Diet

Your body needs protein every day to build, repair, and maintain your body tissue. It also helps your body fight infections and help wounds heal.

You may need more protein if you are on dialysis. Ask your dietitian how much protein is right for you.

Protein servings

Your best sources of protein are unprocessed animal foods such as fish, poultry, eggs, pork, and beef. These foods are high in protein and low in potassium and phosphorus.

Other foods high in protein are milk products, beans and lentils, nuts and nut butters, seeds (pumpkin, sunflower), tofu, and nutrition supplements. These foods can be high in potassium and/or phosphorus.

If you need to limit potassium and/or phosphorus, you might need to limit these foods.

Your dietitian will work with you to find the amount and type of protein that is best for you.

On page 2 is a list of foods with protein. It tells you how much protein is in 1 serving of each food.

You may find it helps to measure your food at first to make sure you're getting the right amount of protein.

Aim for _____ grams (g) of protein or _____ounces (oz) a day.

For meat and cheese:

1 serving = 1 oz = 7 grams of protein



The palm of your hand can guide your portions of meat, fish, or poultry.

For many people, their palm = about the size of a 3 oz (90 g) serving of cooked meat.

Meeting your protein needs

Use the ideas below to help you meet your protein servings for the day.

Ideas for meals:

- Don't skip meals. Have at least 3 meals a day, and include foods with protein at each meal.
- Add a boiled egg or grilled beef strips to a salad.
- Include lean pork or chicken strips in a stir fry.
- Add chicken breast or salmon chunks to a vegetable kabob.
- Add cooked ground beef or chicken to a soup, stew, spaghetti sauce, or casserole.
- Add flavour to your protein by grilling outdoors or trying herbs, spices, or marinades.
- Add beans or lentils to soups, casseroles, salads, and pasta sauces.

Ideas for snacks:

- Try egg, chicken, or tuna salad on crackers.
- Use hummus as a dip for raw vegetables.
- Use nut/seed butters as a dip for fruit like apples.
- Top Greek or Icelandic yogurt with berries.

Ask your dietitian for more ideas to get enough protein every day.

Shopping for protein foods

The tips below can help you get the most nutrition for your money.

- Buy yogurt in a large tub instead of in single serving sizes.
- Replace canned beans or meat with dried beans, lentils, and split peas.
- Choose eggs as the protein food in your meal more often.
- Buy canned or frozen tuna and salmon instead of fresh fish.
- Buy meat in larger amounts, divide it at home and freeze portions.
- Purchase less expensive cuts of meat such as chicken pieces (legs, thighs), ground meat, stewing meat, blade or flank steak.

Foods higher in protein

Food Group	Food and Drinks	Serving Size	Protein (grams)
Meat, fish, poultry, and eggs 	Meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz (30 g)	7
	Shrimp, boiled or steamed	6 medium (30 g)	7
	Canned tuna or salmon, rinsed, bones removed	¼ cup (60 mL)	7
	Egg or liquid egg substitute	1 (large) or ¼ cup (60 mL)	6
Beans and lentils 	Tofu (soy), regular, firm, or extra firm	65 g cubes or ¼ cup (60 mL)	6
	Soy beans (edamame)	48 g or ¼ cup (60 mL)	6
	Lentils, canned or cooked	¼ cup (60 mL)	5
	Beans, kidney or black, canned or cooked	¼ cup (60 mL)	3–4
	Tofu (soy), soft or silken	65 g cubes or ¼ cup (60 mL)	3
	Chickpeas, canned or cooked	¼ cup (60 mL)	3
	Hummus, 1 Tbsp (15 mL)	¼ cup (60 mL)	3
Milk, dairy, and soy beverages 	Yogurt: Greek or Icelandic type	½ cup (125 mL)	10–12
	Cottage or ricotta cheese	¼ cup (60 mL)	6–7
	Paneer	1 oz (30 g)	6–7
	Cheese: cheddar, mozzarella, or Swiss	1 oz (30 g)	7–8
	Milk	½ cup (125 mL)	5
	Fortified soy beverage	½ cup (125 mL)	4
	Yogurt or yogurt drinks ★	½ cup (125 mL)	3–4
Grain foods 	Cooked cereal: oat bran, mixed grain, rolled oats	¾ cup (175 mL)	4–6
	Cold cereal, labelled as high protein ★	30 g (1/8 -3/4 cup)	5–7
	Quinoa, cooked	½ cup (125 mL)	4
	Bread, toasted, whole wheat	1 slice	3–4
Oils and fats 	Nut butters or seed butters	2 Tbsp (30 mL)	6–7
	Nuts	2 Tbsp (30 mL)	2–4
	Hemp seed hearts	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	3
	Seeds: flax, sesame, or chia	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	1–2

Note: The amount of protein in each serving varies depending on the brand. Some plant-based beverages (almond, coconut, cashew, rice, and oat) are low in protein, so they are not listed here.

If you are vegetarian or vegan, speak with your dietitian to decide how much beans or lentils are right for you.

★ May contain phosphate additives. Check the ingredient list if you need to control your phosphorus levels.