



Keep You and Your Family Lean with Lean PROTEIN

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What is protein?

You may already know that muscles are made up of protein, but many other important parts of the human body need protein, too. That's why protein is so important for normal growth and development.

Protein works together with other nutrients, like carbohydrates and fat, to make you strong and healthy. The type of protein food and the amount you eat makes a big difference. The Protein Food Group on MyPlate includes beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, seafood, lean poultry and meats and eggs. Protein is also found in some foods from other food groups, such as dairy.

Some types of protein foods are higher in fat or saturated fat, which is bad for your heart if you eat large amounts. Animal protein foods are often higher in fat and contain larger amounts of saturated fats. Plant protein foods are often lower in fat and contain less saturated fat. When you choose animal protein foods, choose lean meat (look for 90% or higher on the label) and seafood, including fish and shellfish (aim for two 4-ounce servings each week).

Remember, different cooking methods can add extra fat. Try broiling, baking, and roasting foods instead of frying.



Healthy PROTEIN Foods

Beans & Peas	kidney beans, red beans, black beans, pinto beans, white beans, chickpeas, green peas, soybeans, tofu, and more
Nuts & Seeds	peanuts, almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pecans, pumpkin seeds, cashews, and nut butters.
Seafood	tuna, salmon, and many other types of fish
Lean Poultry	skinless chicken and turkey
Lean Meat	lean cuts of beef, pork, and lamb (90% or leaner)
Eggs	whole eggs, egg whites, and egg substitute

How much healthy protein do I need?

The average person needs 5½ ounces of protein-rich foods each day.

What gives ONE ounce of protein?

Beans & Peas	¼ cup cooked beans or tofu
Nuts & Seeds	1 tablespoon nut butter (like peanut butter or almond butter) or ½ ounce nuts or seeds
Seafood	1 ounce fish
Lean Poultry	1 ounce poultry
Lean Meat	1 ounce meat
Eggs	1 whole egg or ½ cup egg substitute



1 small chicken breast = 3 ounces
About the size of a deck of cards or palm of your hand.

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020

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Cooking Beans, Legumes, and Peas

Beans, legumes, and peas are among the cheapest and healthiest foods. Use them in soups, stews, and other baked dishes, or mix them in with your favorite salad. Many people overlook these wonderful culinary treasures, but beans, legumes, and peas are high in protein and fiber, low in fat, and full of flavor! Dry beans, legumes, and peas are easy to cook, and far cheaper than their canned versions. Plus, since they are so high in protein, you can replace meat with beans for a few meals each week.

3 Easy Steps to the PERFECT Bean

1. Sort and Rinse – Spread beans out on a clean kitchen towel or baking sheet. Throw away any beans that are discolored or shriveled. Pour the good beans into a colander or bowl and rinse well with cold clean water. Drain.

2. Soak – Most dry beans, except lentils and split peas, need to be soaked before cooking them. There are 2 ways to soak beans.

Short soak – Place beans in a large cooking pot with lid. Cover the beans with a 3 inch layer of water (or about 4 to 5 cups of water per 1 cup of beans). Bring to a boil. Continue boiling for 3 minutes. Cover the pot, and set aside for 2 to 4 hours. Drain and throw away the water. Rinse beans before cooking.

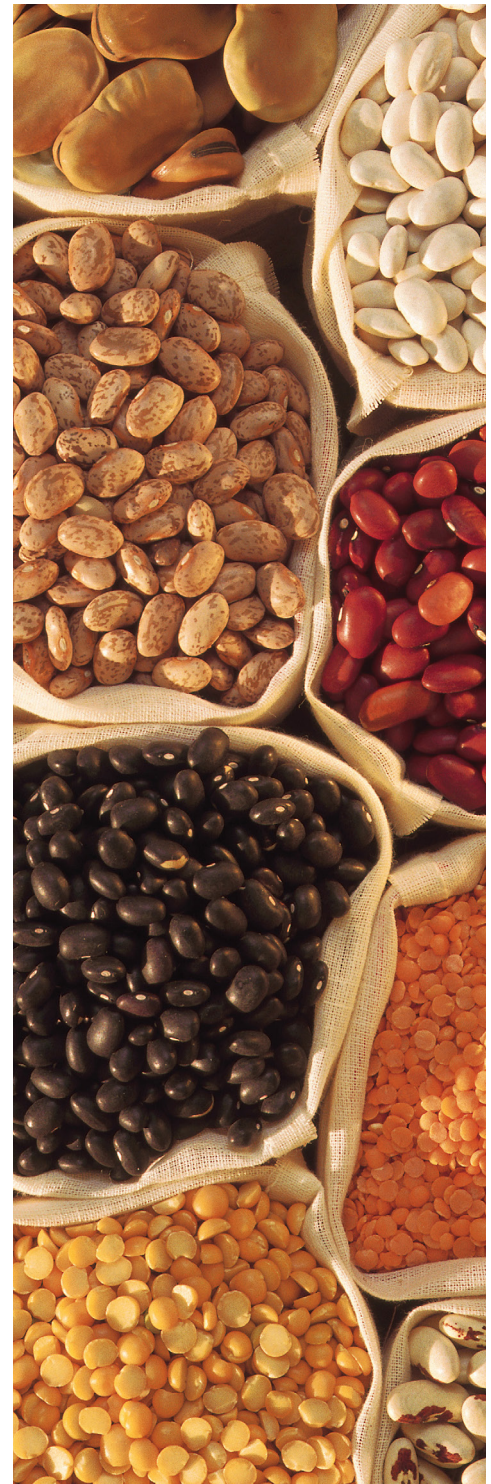
Long soak – Place beans in a large cooking pot with lid. Cover the beans with a 3 inch layer of water (or about 4 to 5 cups of water per 1 cup of beans). Cover the pot and soak beans for 8 hours or overnight. Drain and throw away the water. Rinse beans well before cooking.

3. Cook – Cook beans in fresh water (if you want to season your beans while they cook, see below for more information), using a large cooking pot with lid. Use about 3 to 4 cups of water for each cup of beans (or enough water to cover the beans by 1 inch). Bring beans to a boil. Reduce heat to low, and simmer until tender. Stir occasionally. Check the directions on the package for more information on cooking times for each type of bean, legume, or pea.

NOTE: seasoning beans

To add more flavor to your beans, try adding these spices to the cooking water: chopped onion, garlic, and/or bay leaves. Add all other spices and seasonings 30 minutes before the beans are finished cooking. Do not add salt, sugar, tomatoes, vinegar, wine, or lemon juice until after the beans are completely cooked.

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020



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