

Nutrition Perspective

How Protein Helps Curb Hunger

Eating protein-rich foods with your meals and snacks may help to curb hunger between meals. That's why enjoying plenty of lean protein as part of a healthy balanced diet may help with appetite control and weight loss.

Research shows...

Appetite management

A number of studies have found protein can help keep people feeling full between meals, more so than either carbohydrate or fat. Therefore protein may help to control hunger, which may in turn help you to eat less. So if you're looking for a way to better manage your appetite, choosing foods that are higher in protein may be part of the answer.

Weight loss

If you want to lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you eat. In studies where people chose how much they ate, they generally ate fewer calories and lost more body fat when they were on a higher protein diet, at least up to a year. Since protein may help curb your hunger it may help you to control your calorie intake and lose more weight.

Weight maintenance

People often find that it's difficult to keep weight off after losing it. Research shows that higher protein diets tend to help preserve more muscle during weight loss and weight maintenance compared to higher carbohydrate diets. Since muscle actually helps your body burn more energy, having more muscle may make it easier for you to keep weight off.

Overall health

Research has also shown that weight loss diets that are rich in lean protein can help improve people's blood triglyceride (fat) and blood glucose (sugar) levels. This is very good if you want to lower your risk of heart disease and diabetes.



How much protein?

Current dietary guidelines tell us that adults can safely consume 10 to 35% of their daily energy (calories) from protein. This translates to a range of about 50 to 175 grams of protein for an adult who eats 2,000 calories a day. Most Canadians eat well within this range. In fact, average adult protein intakes are in the lower end of the range, at about 17% of energy. This suggests most people can enjoy more protein-rich foods, which may benefit their health.

TIP

Bumping up the protein in your meals may keep you satisfied longer. That can help you resist the urge to reach for unhealthy snacks between meals. If you do get hungry for a snack, have some lean protein to tide you over. See over for sensible ways to add protein to your meals and snacks.

Read on to learn how to make 'protein-rich' food choices as part of your healthy eating plan...



Protein-rich foods	Example (per Food Guide Serving)	Protein (grams)
Lean meats	Beef steak, lean, cooked, 75 g	27
Tofu	Tofu, regular, soft or firm, 150 g	24
Poultry (skinless)	Chicken, roasted, 75 g	19
Fish and shellfish	Haddock, baked, 75 g	18
Eggs	Eggs, 2 large, hardboiled	13
Lentils	Lentils, boiled, 175 mL	13
Fortified soy beverages	Soy beverage, fortified, 250 mL	12
Beans	Kidney beans, dark red, boiled, 175 mL	11
Milk (skim, 1% and 2%)	Milk, 1% M.F., 250 mL	9
Lower fat yogurt	Yogurt, plain, 1% M.F., 175 g	9
Nuts and seeds	Almonds, dried, unblanched, 60 mL	8

Source: Health Canada, Canadian Nutrient File, 2007b

Did You Know?

Research shows that our bodies naturally burn a few more calories when we eat protein-rich meals, than higher fat or carbohydrate meals.

Put lean protein on your plate

There are all kinds of ways to add lean protein to your meals and snacks. Try these ideas to help you enjoy more protein.

Breakfast

- Enjoy poached, hardboiled or scrambled eggs. Add some lower-fat cheese and lean meat to an omelette for added protein.
- Top your cereal or yogurt with a small handful of nuts and seeds (such as slivered almonds, crushed walnuts and sunflower seeds).
- Put some lean protein on your morning bagel or toast with a lower-fat melted cheese, nut butters or lean deli meat.
- Make a yogurt or soy smoothie with frozen bananas and berries.

Lunch

- Top a salad with strips of steak, chicken, ham, tuna, hardboiled egg, nuts, seeds or chick peas.
- Have an open-faced sandwich with roast beef, turkey or ham and lower-fat sliced cheese.
- Go for some sushi.
- Enjoy a warm bowl of chilli.

Dinner

- Make a stew with lean meat and vegetables.
- Stuff whole grain tortilla wraps with cooked lean ground meat, shredded cheese, lettuce, salsa, avocado and a spoonful of plain yogurt.
- Enjoy a glass of milk with your meal.
- Put plenty of meat or tofu and a handful of sesame seeds in your stir-fry.

Snacks

- Pack beef jerky in your lunch for an afternoon boost.
- Top your fruit with some cottage cheese after your workout.
- Spread tuna on whole grain crackers for a great afternoon snack.
- Grab a handful of almonds.

Go for balance

It's important to aim for a healthy balance of foods from each food group. *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* is a good place to start at: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.

A registered dietitian can also help you increase your protein intake as part of a healthy diet. To find one in your area, click on 'Find a Dietitian' at: www.dietitians.ca.



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