

Why Protein?

Protein is one of the five main food groups (fruit, vegetables, dairy, grains, and protein) and one of three macronutrients (fats, protein, and carbohydrates) that your body uses for energy everyday. Protein is important because your body uses it as building blocks for muscle, cartilage, bone, skin, and blood cells. Proteins are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins that your body needs to function.

Protein supplies your body with needed energy.
1 gram protein = 4 calories

Types of Protein Foods

Proteins are made up of amino acids. Your body can make some amino acids on its own, but nine amino acids only come from the food you eat. The nine amino acids that must be consumed in your food are called essential amino acids. Protein foods fall into three categories based on whether they contain the nine essential amino acids:

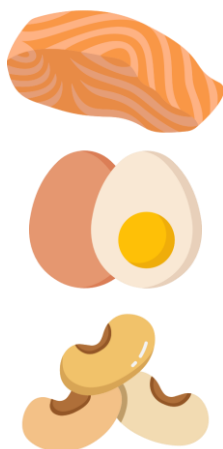
Incomplete Protein

- Do not contain all 9 essential amino acids.
- OR contain all 9 essential amino acids but not in a sufficient amount
- Includes plant-based options: beans, lentils, peas, nuts, and seeds



Complete Protein

- Contain all 9 essential amino acids.
- Includes animal-based and plant-based options: meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy, tofu, soybeans, and other soy products



Complementary Protein

- Two or more incomplete proteins that, when eaten together, contain all 9 essential amino acids. Beans and rice are a common example.
- Combinations include:
 - Beans + grains, nuts, or seeds
 - Vegetables + grains, nuts, or seeds
 - Corn + legumes

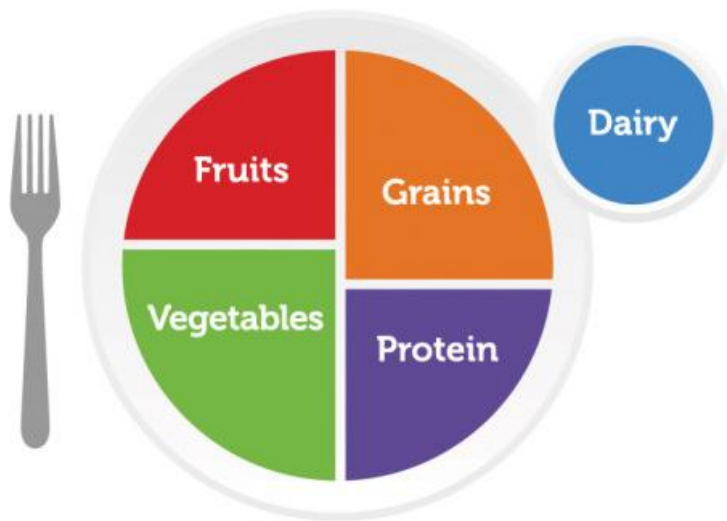


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Plan Your Meals

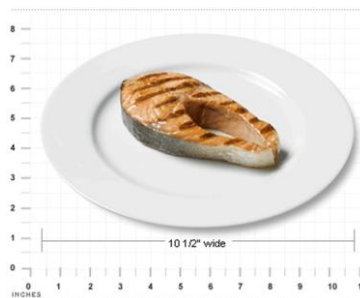
Use MyPlate as a guide to incorporate protein into your meals. About one-quarter of your plate should contain a protein food during each meal.



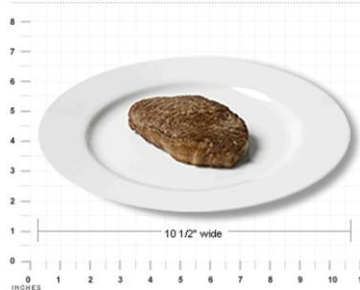
Healthy Habits

- ★ Plan meals with a variety of proteins to meet essential amino acid needs
- ★ Choose lean proteins like chicken, fish, and lean beef cuts like sirloin and top round
- ★ Incorporate plant proteins into your meals or snacks like nuts, hummus, or nut butters

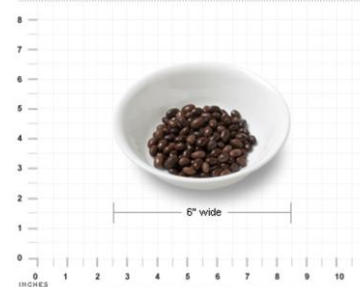
Think about portion size when adding protein to your plate. The pictures below show examples of lean protein foods you can incorporate when building your plate.



6 oz fish=
42g protein,
12 g fat



4 oz lean
strip steak=
28g protein,
20g fat



1/2 cup of
black beans=
7g protein,
2g fat



The amount of protein you should consume each day depends on your age, sex, height, weight, activity level, and other nutritional needs. Find the right amount of protein for you by getting your MyPlate Plan.

Scan the QR code to **create your customized plan** or access MyPlate Plan at www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan

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