

STAY STRONG: PROTECT MUSCLE WHILE LOSING WEIGHT

People losing weight with weight-loss medications, lifestyle change, or weight-loss surgery are at risk of muscle loss. Our bodies get energy from the food we eat, and when we eat less, our bodies can break down muscles for energy.¹



WHY MUSCLE MATTERS

Muscle tissue uses up more energy than fat tissue, even when you're not moving. Keeping your muscle during weight loss can help you maintain weight loss over time.² Adding protein to your diet and focusing on strength training can help you maintain muscle.

PLAN FOR PROTEIN



Getting enough high-quality protein as part of a balanced eating pattern can help you to stay healthy and strong while you lose weight.³

RECOMMENDATION

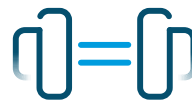
At least 0.36 grams x pounds of body weight*

For example: A person who weighs 200 pounds needs at least 72 grams of protein per day.

GETTING STARTED

Aim for **20-30** grams of protein at each meal. If you have trouble eating enough protein to meet your needs, an oral nutritional supplement can provide extra protein while you lose weight.

FOCUS ON STRENGTH TRAINING



Strength training makes your muscles work harder against a weight or force. This type of exercise can help maintain and build muscle during weight loss.⁴

RECOMMENDATION

At least twice a week⁵

Balance your strength training with other types of exercises or forms of physical activity.

GETTING STARTED

Weights: Dumbbells, barbells or weight machines

Body weight: Exercises like push-ups, squats, lunges and sit-ups

Resistance bands: Elastic bands that provide the right amount of resistance for you

*The amount of protein you need each day may be different. When you are losing weight, you might need more protein.

IDENTIFY YOUR PROTEIN NEEDS AND SOURCES



Weight in pounds: _____

x 0.36

Protein needs: _____

Minimum recommended amount based on the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for adults aged 18-64⁶ with no consideration for activity. Experts recommend that adults aged 65 years and older consume more protein per day, approximately 0.5g protein/pound body weight (or 1.1g protein/kg body weight).⁷ Physical activity, chronic illness, or injury may further increase protein needs.

CHOOSE FOODS FROM EACH COLUMN TO BUILD YOUR MEALS BELOW

¼ of your plate Proteins**	¼ of your plate Grains and Starches***	½ of your plate Non-starchy vegetables and/or fruits***
1 egg + 2 egg whites, or ¾ cup of egg substitute	15-21 grams	1 slice of large sandwich bread
1 cup Greek yogurt	20 grams	1 small (6-inch) flour tortilla, pita or roti
8 fluid ounces low fat or non-fat milk or unsweetened soy milk	8-11 grams	½ cup of ready-to-eat cereal
3 ounces chicken, fish, pork or beef	21 grams	½ cup of cooked pasta
½ cup cooked beans or lentils	6-9 grams	½ cup of cooked rice, farro, barley, amaranth
1 cup raw, firm tofu	20 grams	1 large baked potato, yam, plantain, or sweet potato (1 cup mashed, cooked)
½ cup low fat or nonfat ricotta or cottage cheese	10-12 grams	½ cup cooked oats
		1 small apple, mango, papaya 1 large banana, orange, peach
		1 cup of strawberries, blueberries, blackberries
		1 cup of fresh diced fruit or canned fruit
		2 cups of raw lettuce greens
		1 cup of cooked eggplant, zucchini or summer squash
		1 cup of cooked broccoli, green beans, carrots, peppers, spinach, bok choy, cabbage
		1 cup of sliced raw peppers, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes

Amount of protein for each food was obtained from USDA FoodData Central | *Serving sizes obtained from MyPlate | U.S. Department of Agriculture

CONSIDER HIGH PROTEIN SNACKS

- Greek Yogurt with Berries
- Hard-Boiled Eggs
- Cheese and Turkey Roll-Ups
- Hummus and Veggies
- Cooked or Roasted Edamame
- Cottage Cheese with Fruit
- Protein Bars or Shake with at least 10 grams of protein per serving



Talk to your healthcare provider to find out how much protein you need, what exercises are right for you, and how often you should exercise.



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1. Heymsfield SB, et al. *Obes Rev.* 2014;15(4):310-321. | 2. McCarthy D, Berg A. *Nutrients.* 2021;13(7):2473. | 3. Mechanick JI, et al. *Obes Rev.* 2025;26(1):e13841. | 4. Lopez P, et al. *Obes Rev.* 2022;23(5):e13428. | 5. CDC. *Adult Activity: An Overview.* Published December 20, 2023. Accessed February 5, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/adults.html> | 6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.* Published December 2015. Accessed February 5, 2025. https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf | 7. Deutz NE, et al. *Clin Nutr.* 2014;33(6):929-936.