

# Protein

## Why do we need it?

Proteins are a basic building block of the body. We need protein to keep our bodies in good working order, to repair body cells as they wear out, and for protecting us from bacteria and viruses. This essential nutrient can also make you feel full, so include protein with each meal.



## How much do we need?

Adult men and women usually need **2-3 servings of protein, or 5- to 6-ounce equivalents, per day.** Any extra protein will be stored in the body as fat.



## Protein recommendations:

### Go lean with protein.

- Choose lean meats and poultry. Lean beef cuts include round steaks (top loin, top sirloin, and top round) and roasts (round eye, top round, and bottom round, round tip, arm, and chuck shoulder).
- When selecting beef, choose cuts labeled “Choice” or “Select,” instead of “Prime.” “Prime” usually has more fat. Choose cuts with the least amount of visible fat (marbling). Even then, trim any visible fat before preparing the beef. Choose extra-lean ground beef. The label should say at least 90% lean; 93% or 95% is even better.



**Vary your protein choices by including seafood more often.**

- Choose a minimum of **8 ounces of seafood each week.** Seafood is rich in heart healthy Omega-3 fatty acids and includes fish, such as salmon, tuna, herring, trout, and tilapia, and shellfish, such as shrimp, crab, and oysters.



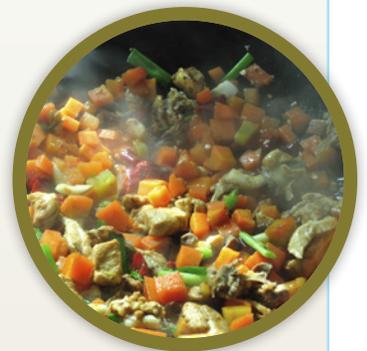
**Choose dry beans or peas as a main dish or part of a meal.**

- Consider including two or more meatless meals in your weekly menu. Some choices are meatless chili with kidney or pinto beans; split pea, lentil, minestrone, or white bean soups; black bean enchiladas; rice and beans; veggie burgers or garden burgers; and chef salads with garbanzo or kidney beans.



**Choose nuts as a snack, in salads, or in main dishes.**

- Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to meat or poultry (i.e., pine nuts in pesto sauce, slivered almonds on steamed vegetables, toasted peanuts or cashews in vegetable stir-fry). Add walnuts or pecans to salads instead of cheese or meat.



The chart on the next page lists specific amounts that count as 1-ounce equivalents and common portions.

	<b>Amount of protein that counts as 1-ounce equivalents</b>	<b>Common protein portions and the ounce equivalents</b>
<b>Meats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 ounce (oz) cooked lean beef</li> <li>• 1 oz cooked lean pork or ham</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small steak (eye of round, filet) = 3 ½- to 4-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 small lean hamburger = 2-to 3-oz equivalents</li> </ul>
<b>Poultry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 oz cooked chicken or turkey without skin</li> <li>• 1 sandwich slice to turkey (4½ x 2½ x 1/8")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small chicken breast half = 3-oz equivalents</li> <li>• ½ Cornish game hen = 4-oz equivalents</li> </ul>
<b>Seafood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 oz cooked fish or shellfish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 can of tuna, drained = 3- to 4-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 salmon steak = 4- to 6-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 small trout = 3-oz equivalents</li> </ul>
<b>Eggs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 egg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 egg whites = 2-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 3 egg yolks = 1-oz equivalent</li> </ul>
<b>Nuts and Seeds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ oz of nuts (12 almonds, 24 pistachios, 7 walnut halves)</li> <li>• ½ oz of seeds (pumpkin, sunflower or squash seeds, hulled, roasted)</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon of peanut butter or almond butter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 oz of nuts or seeds = 2-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 2 tablespoons of peanut butter = 2-oz equivalents</li> </ul>
<b>Beans and Peas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ cup of cooked beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or white beans)</li> <li>• ¼ cup of cooked peas (such as chickpeas, cowpeas, lentils, or split peas)</li> <li>• ¼ cup of baked beans, refried beans</li> <li>• ¼ cup (about 2 ounces) of tofu</li> <li>• 1 oz tempeh, cooked</li> <li>• ¼ cup roasted soybeans</li> <li>• 1 falafel patty (2 ¼", 4 ounces)</li> <li>• 2 tablespoons hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup split pea soup = 2-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 cup lentil soup = 2-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 cup bean soup = 2-oz equivalents</li> <li>• 1 soy or bean burger patty = 2-oz equivalents</li> </ul>

Note: Milk, cheese, and yogurt are also good sources of protein. Refer to the “Dairy” MOVE!® Handout for more information.