

PROTEIN IN THE DIET

What is protein?

Proteins are a kind of building block found in every cell of the body. Your child's body uses protein to build and repair skin, muscles, and organs. Protein is found in foods such as meats, poultry, fish, soy products, nuts, and seeds.

How much protein does my child need?

The amount of protein your child needs to eat depends on their age, gender, and level of physical activity. As a general rule, your child should get 10-35% of total daily calories from protein.

	2-3 years old	4-8 years old	9-13 years old	14-18 years old
Boys	2 oz	4 oz	5 oz	6.5 oz
Girls	2 oz	4 oz	5 oz	5 oz

*1 oz = 1 ounce of meat poultry or fish
1/4 cup cooked beans
1 egg
1 tablespoon of peanut butter
1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds

How can my child eat the right proteins?

It is important to choose carefully which proteins your child eats. Eating too much meat can lead to high cholesterol levels. A high-protein diet can also put a strain on your child's kidneys.

Here are some ideas for getting enough protein without getting too much fat:

- But only lean cuts of meat, such as chicken or turkey breast without skin; pork tenderloin; flank, round, or sirloin beef; and low-sodium ham
- Let your child (3+ years old) snack on nuts and seeds such as raw almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, or pumpkin seeds
- Try soy products such as tofu, tempeh, and soy milk
- Cook lean. Bake, broil, grill, steam, or microwave meats instead of frying them
- Limit meat to 2 servings per day, which each serving being about 3-4 oz (the size of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand)
- Serve 2 or more meals each week that do not include meat. Increase servings of vegetables, rice, pasta, and beans in all meals. Try casseroles, pasta, and stir-fry dishes that have less meat and more vegetables, grains, and beans
- Eat broiled or grilled fish, such as salmon or tuna, at least 2 times a week
- Fast foods can be very high in total fat, saturated fat, and trans-fat. If your child eats fast food, choose grilled chicken or a salad with fat-free or low-fat dressing

How do proteins fit into a weight-loss program?

Eating a very high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet may lead to faster weight loss than a balanced diet which includes a variety of foods. However, very high protein diets often lack important nutrients and fiber, and they can be high in unhealthy fats.

The healthiest weight loss diets include a variety of foods with a focus on low-calorie, less processed, high-fiber foods with low amounts of saturated fats.