Protein Pointers

Protein is essential for maintaining muscle. Adults with more muscle mass have more independence, better balance and less risk for falls and fractures. Beginning in their 40s, adults typically lose 1 or 2 percent of their muscle mass every year. Eating the right amount of protein throughout the day can help you maintain muscle.

Eat protein at every meal

Eat 3 to 4 ounces (20-30 grams) of protein at each meal. Include these high-protein foods often:

- Lean meat, chicken, pork and seafood
- Beans and lentils, nuts and seeds
- Milk (if you're lactose intolerant, try lactose-free milk – it's the same as regular, but without the lactose)
- Cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt
- Eggs

What counts as an ounce of protein?

Remember that your goal is 3-4 ounces per meal.

- 1 ounce of cooked meat, fish or chicken
  (3-4 ounces is about the size of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand)
- ¼ cup of cooked beans, peas or lentils
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter (picture about half of a golf ball)

- ½ ounce of nuts or seeds (12 almonds, 7 walnut halves)
- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1.5 ounces of hard cheese (about the size of 3 dice)
- ¼ cup of cottage cheese

When reading food labels where protein is listed in grams, consider that 7-8 grams is about 1 ounce.

Spread it out

Most people eat very little protein early in the day and a lot at the end of the day. Spreading protein evenly throughout the day is important for these benefits:

- Building muscle
- Healing wounds
- Fighting infections
- Controlling blood sugar
- Sustaining energy
- Strengthening bones
- Controlling appetite

Don't forget exercise

Protein and exercise together help build and repair muscle, which is crucial for staying fit for everyday activities.

Learn more about protein at **www.choosemyplate.gov/protein-foods**.

This information is for general educational purposes only – always follow your doctor's recommendations, and check with your doctor if you have any questions.