

How to Increase the Amount of Protein in Your Diet

It is important to increase the amount of protein in your diet during your cancer treatments.

This can help:

- Stop you from losing weight
- Improve your strength and energy level
- Decrease your risk of getting an infection
- Your body recover from cancer treatments

How much protein do you need?

Add a source of protein with each meal or snack throughout the day. You do not need to keep track of the number of grams consumed daily.

How to increase the amount of protein in your diet

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks even when you do not feel hungry.
- Eat a source of protein at every meal and snack.
- Eat your largest meal when you are hungry.
- Exercise can help improve your appetite.

Protein is found in many foods. This includes:

- Meat, fish, poultry
- Milk, yogurt, kefir, pudding
- Eggs, beans and lentils
- Nuts and nut butters
- Soy products and whole grains

See the chart below for a list of high protein food choices. Ask to talk to a registered dietitian in the cancer centre if you have questions or concerns about any of the information in this handout.

Food Choices High in Protein

Food	Portion size	Amount of protein (g)
Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Seafood		
Beef, chicken, turkey, pork, lamb	75 g (2 ½ oz)	21 to 28
Ground meat (chicken, turkey, pork beef)	75 g (2 ½ oz)	17 to 21
Deli meats	60 g or 2 slices	10
Fish and shellfish	75 g (2 ½ oz)	15 to 20
Eggs	2 large	12
Egg whites	2 whites or 75 ml/¼ cup	7
Canned tuna, salmon, sardines	75 g (2 ½ oz)	17 to 22

Food	Portion size	Amount of protein (g)
Legumes, Nuts, Seeds		
Tofu	130 g (1/2 cup)	10
Tempeh	100 g (1/3 cup)	18
Fortified soy beverage	250 ml (1 cup)	8
Edamame	125 ml (1/2 cup)	12
Lentils	125 ml (1/2 cup)	9
Lima beans	125 ml (1/2 cup)	7
Chickpeas	125 ml (1/2 cup)	6
Kidney, black, pinto beans	125 ml (1/2 cup)	6 to 8
Refried beans	125 ml (1/2 cup)	6
Hummus	100ml (1/3 cup)	7
Peanut butter/Almond butter	30 ml (2 tablespoons)	7 to 8
Flax seed/wheat germ	30ml (2 tablespoons)	3
Nuts or seeds	60 ml (1/4 cup)	5 to 9
Hemp/chia seeds	30ml (2 tablespoons)	7
Grains		
Quinoa	125 ml (1/2 cup)	4
Pasta or brown rice	125 ml (1/2 cup)	3 to 4
Whole grain bread	2 slices	5 to 10
Wheat germ	30 ml (2 tablespoons)	3
Granola	125 ml (1/2 cup)	4 to 6
Dairy products and alternatives		
Greek yogurt	100ml (1/3 cup)	8
Regular yogurt	175 ml (3/4 cup)	5
Cow's milk, buttermilk, kefir	250 ml (1 cup)	8-9
Ultra-filtered high protein milk	250ml (1 cup)	14-18
Cottage cheese	125 ml (1/2 cup)	12
Hard Cheese	60 g (2 oz)	14
Feta cheese	60 g (2 oz)	8

Protein Powders

A protein powder may be helpful if you have trouble getting enough protein from food. Protein powders can come from milk (like whey or casein) or plants (like pea or soy).

Most protein powders have between 10 and 30 grams of protein in one scoop. The amount can change depending on the product. Read the nutrition label to see how much protein it has.

Some protein powders also have added vitamins, minerals, herbal products, or sweeteners. Talk to a registered dietitian or pharmacist before using a protein powder.

This handout was created by the Patient Education Program at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Lakeridge Health. It was last reviewed in May of 2025.