



# Vary your protein routine

**Protein foods include both animal (meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs) and plant (beans, peas, soy products, nuts, and seeds) sources.** We all need protein—but most Americans eat enough, and some eat more than they need. How much is enough? Most people, ages 9 and older, should eat 5 to 7 ounces\* of protein foods each day depending on overall calorie needs.

**1 Vary your protein food choices**  
Eat a variety of foods from the Protein Foods Group each week. Experiment with beans or peas, nuts, soy, and seafood as main dishes.

**2 Choose seafood twice a week**  
Eat seafood in place of meat or poultry twice a week. Select a variety of seafood, including those that are higher in oils and low in mercury, such as salmon, trout, and herring.



**3 Select lean meat and poultry**  
Choose lean cuts of meat like round or sirloin and ground beef that is at least 93% lean. Trim or drain fat from meat and remove poultry skin.

**4 Save with eggs**  
Eggs can be an inexpensive protein option and part of a healthy eating style. Make eggs part of your weekly choices.

**5 Eat plant protein foods more often**  
Try beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black, or white beans; split peas; chickpeas; hummus), soy products (tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers), nuts, and seeds. They are lower in saturated fat and some are higher in fiber.



\* What counts as an ounce of protein foods? 1 ounce lean meat, poultry, or seafood; 1 egg; ¼ cup cooked beans or peas; ½ ounce nuts or seeds; or 1 tablespoon peanut butter.

**6 Consider nuts and seeds**  
Choose unsalted nuts or seeds as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Nuts and seeds are a concentrated source of calories, so eat small portions to keep calories in check.

**7 Keep it tasty and healthy**  
Try grilling, broiling, roasting, or baking—they don't add extra fat. Some lean meats need slow, moist cooking to be tender—try a slow cooker for them. Avoid breading meat or poultry, which adds calories.

**8 Make a healthy sandwich**  
Choose turkey, roast beef, canned tuna or salmon, or peanut butter for sandwiches. Many deli meats, such as regular bologna or salami, are high in fat and sodium—make them occasional treats only.



**9 Think small when it comes to meat portions**  
Get the flavor you crave but in a smaller portion. Make or order a small turkey burger or a “petite” size steak.

**10 Check the sodium**  
Check the Nutrition Facts label to limit sodium. Salt is added to many canned foods—including soups, vegetables, beans, and meats. Many processed meats—such as ham, sausage, and hot dogs—are high in sodium. Some fresh chicken, turkey, and pork are brined in a salt solution for flavor and tenderness.