

The protein-weight loss connection

Many strategies can help with weight loss, but what's an effective way to lose fat while preserving muscle mass? Try combining regular exercise with a diet that includes foods high in protein yet moderate in calories, such as lean beef, pork, poultry, fish, and eggs.

How much protein do we need during weight loss?

Aim for 1.2 to 1.6 g protein/kg body weight/day, spread evenly over 3 or 4 meals.¹ For a 68 kg (150 lb) adult, that's roughly 80 to 100 g of protein per day.

GOOD TO KNOW:











In order to see weight loss benefits, there may be a threshold of about 25 to 30 g of protein PER MEAL.¹ Dietary counselling can help people stick with an optimal protein diet for the long term.



The calorie cost of protein foods

The amount of protein in foods varies. Few foods match the protein density of beef and other meats. Include animal protein such as lean meats in your meal plan to help keep calories in check while increasing protein intake.

HERE'S WHAT 35 G OF PROTEIN LOOKS LIKE

	AMOUNT	CALORIES
 Beef (cooked)	 100 grams = 1 serving* (the size of your palm)	250
 Almonds	 over 1 cup (3.3 servings); 1/3 cup (50 grams) = 1 serving*	960
 Peanut butter	 over 9 tbsp (9.4 servings); 1 tbsp = 1 serving*	860
 Hummus	 1 3/4 cups (14.2 servings); 2 tbsp = 1 serving*	740
 Black beans (cooked/canned)	 over 2 cups (4.3 servings); 1/2 cup = 1 serving*	520

Source: Health Canada, Canadian Nutrient File, 2015, Beef 6172, Almonds 2534, Peanut Butter 6289, Hummus 4870, Black Beans 3377. Nutrient amounts rounded as per 2016 CFIA labelling rounding rules. *Table of Reference Amounts for Food: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/technical-documents/labelling-requirements/table-reference-amounts-food/nutrition-labelling.html>

1. Leidy, H. J., Clifton, P. M., Astrup, A., Wycherly, T. P., Westerterp-Plantenga, M. S., Luscombe-Marsh, N. D., Mattes, R. D. (2015). The role of protein in weight loss and maintenance. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 101(6):1320S-1329S.

Take a “food first” approach to getting enough protein

Some Canadians turn to nutritional supplements to boost their protein intake. Real food tastes better, is less costly and less processed. We're not meant to eat supplements - we're meant to eat food!

GOOD TO KNOW:

Synergy happens when we eat foods together.

- Not only is meat, such as beef, a good source of protein and iron, but eating it also enhances the iron absorbed from plant sources by a whopping 150%.²
- Whole foods have more to offer than individual nutrients. Their benefits are greater than the sum of their parts.



Diabetes and weight loss

According to the 2018 Clinical Practice Guidelines by Diabetes Canada³, weight loss is the most important and effective dietary strategy for obese and overweight adults living with prediabetes or type 2 diabetes. The same report notes that with energy-reduced diets, protein intakes should be maintained or increased. Diet changes should be made in consultation with a dietitian.

Tip the balance of healthy eating in your favour

About 50% of the calories in the Canadian diet come from calorie-rich, nutrient-poor, ultra-processed foods⁴ such as cakes, pop, chips, candy and fast food. For optimal health, prepare meals at home with whole and minimally processed foods. Health Canada's Eat Well Plate is a useful way to think about balanced eating.⁵

Have plenty of vegetables and fruits

Eat protein foods



Make water your drink of choice

Choose whole grain foods

GOOD TO KNOW: The protein in meat is what's called 'complete', meaning it contains all the essential amino acids that humans need for health.

² Engelmann, M. D., Davidsson, L., Sandström, B., Walczyk, T., Hurrell, R. F., & Michaelsen, K. (1998). The influence of meat on nonheme iron absorption in infants. *Pediatr Res.* 43(6):768-73.

³ Clinical Practice Guidelines, Diabetes Canada, 2018. Accessed: <http://guidelines.diabetes.ca/cpg> January 2019.

⁴ Moubarac, J. C. Ultra-processed foods in Canada: consumption, impact on diet quality and policy implications. Montréal: TRANSNUT, University of Montreal; December 2017.

⁵ Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Make healthy meals with the Eat Well Plate. Accessed 2020-03-17.