MEAT

Meat products like chicken, beef, pork, and lamb are some of the most protein-dense foods on Earth. When the animals are “pasture raised” – meaning the animals grazed in pasture year-round rather than being fed a processed diet of grains, soy, hay, and corn in a feedlot – their meat contains far more vitamins and essential omega-3 fats than regular meat. Organic meat is important because the pesticides on animal feed tend to concentrate in their fat tissue. If organic and grass fed meat aren’t in your budget, stick to leaner cuts.

**BEST CHOICES:** Choose grass-fed and organic if you can afford it. Otherwise, stick to lean cuts like skinless chicken breast, tenderloin, and lean ground beef.

**AVOID:** Processed meats (hot dogs, ham, lunch meat, sausages) are linked to higher rates of cancer and heart disease, so avoid whenever possible.

SEAFOOD (FISH, SHELLFISH)

Fish, shellfish, and other seafood are all excellent sources of protein. Fish is the best natural source of essential omega-3 fats, which are critical for proper cardiovascular and brain health. Aim to eat 2-3 servings (4 oz each) of fish per week.

Everyone can benefit from eating fish, but it’s an especially important food for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. This is because fish contains nutrients that are important for children’s growth and development. However, as a result of natural processes and human activity, fish can contain mercury – however, only a few species of fish contain enough mercury to be of concern.

**BEST CHOICES:** Fatty fish like salmon, herring, and sardines are the best sources of omega-3 fats. Canned options are convenient and cheap - give them a try! Shellfish, crab, lobster, and lean fish like tuna and tilapia are also good choices. For a complete list, visit seafoodwatch.org.

**AVOID:** High-mercury seafoods like shark, marlin, tilefish, swordfish, and orange roughy.
LEGUMES (BEANS, PEANUTS)

1/2 CUP COOKED = 20g PROTEIN

GREAT SOURCE OF FIBER, B-VITAMINS, MAGNESIUM, ZINC

HEART HEALTHY

Legumes (beans) pack a ton of nutrition into a small package. Enjoy chickpeas, black beans, lentils, split peas, and pinto beans in soups, stews, stir-fry dishes, or in salads. Did you know that peanuts are legumes, too? Peanuts make a great protein-rich snack.

Unlike animal protein foods, vegetable proteins like legumes don’t contain all 9 essential amino acids, making them incomplete proteins. Whole grains, nuts, and seeds contain the missing amino acids, so include plenty of these foods in your diet to meet your protein needs.

BEST CHOICES: There are hundreds of legume varieties, and all are great protein sources! When using canned beans, rinse them before cooking to remove excess salt.

AVOID: Peanuts or peanut butter made with trans-fat, added sugar, or added oils.

DAIRY

1/2 CUP COTTAGE CHEESE = 14g | 6 OZ GREEK YOGURT = 17g

GREAT SOURCE OF VITAMINS B2, B12, CALCIUM

BUILDS HEALTHY BONES

Dairy is a great source of high-quality protein, and it’s also packed with bone-building nutrients. Greek yogurt and kefir are excellent choices, as they contain as much protein as 3oz of lean meat and come with a dose of gut-healthy probiotics. Though cheese can be high in protein, it’s also high in fat and calories, so it’s best eaten in moderation.

BEST CHOICES: Unsweetened yogurt (especially greek yogurt), kefir, cottage cheese, low-fat cheeses (feta, ricotta, mozzarella, most hard cheeses), low-fat milk.

TOFU

1 CUP = 20g PROTEIN

HELPS BUILD HEALTHY BONES AND TEETH

GREAT SOURCE OF CALCIUM, MAGNESIUM, MANGANESE

ANTI-CANCER

Tofu is a food made from fermented soybeans. High in protein, vitamins, and minerals, tofu is a mild-tasting food that takes on the flavor of whatever it’s cooked with. Try blending silken tofu into dips, sauces, and smoothies, or marinating cubes of firm tofu in your favorite sauce before tossing into a stir fry. Like beans, tofu is an incomplete protein and must be combined with whole grains to get all 9 essential amino acids.

BEST CHOICES: Look for brands of tofu made with calcium chloride (read the ingredients to be sure). These varieties of tofu have more calcium than milk!

BEST CHOICES: Look for tofu made with non-GMO (genetically modified organism) soybeans. Check the packaging to be sure.