



# GO Lean With Protein

Are you eating enough protein every day? The new food icon, MyPlate, at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov), allows you to calculate the ounces of protein foods you need according to your age, sex and activity level. You can create a personalized eating plan.

MyPlate uses the term “ounce equivalents” when suggesting amounts of protein foods to consume. All of these count as “ounce equivalents” of proteins:

- ▲ 1 ounce of meat, poultry or fish
- ▲ ¼ cup of cooked dry beans
- ▲ 1 egg
- ▲ 1 tablespoon of peanut butter
- ▲ ½ ounce of nuts or seeds

For example, men ages 31 to 50 who are physically active less than 30 minutes per day need about 6 “ounce equivalents” of proteins daily. They would meet their daily protein needs with 3 ounces of meat, ½ cup of cooked dry beans and 1 tablespoon of peanut butter.

Protein is important to have in your diet because it plays a part in the health and maintenance of the body. Choosing protein foods that are lean and low in cholesterol will give you the needed nutrients without the extra fat.

## Try these questions ABOUT CHOOSING lean Protein

1. **True/false:** Choose lean or extra lean ground beef.
2. **True/false:** The leanest choices of beef are round steak, roasts, top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts.
3. **True/false:** When choosing poultry, boneless skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest.
4. **True/false:** The leanest pork cuts are pork loin, tenderloin, center loin and ham.
5. **True/false:** Lean or low-fat turkey, roast beef and ham usually are lower in fat than salami or bologna.

**The answers:** They all are “true.” All are ways to add lean protein to your diet.

## consider these tips

- ▲ Keep choices lean by trimming away all visible fat from meat and poultry and removing chicken skin before cooking.
- ▲ Broil, grill, roast, poach or boil foods instead of frying them and drain off any fat that may appear.
- ▲ Skip or reduce the amount of breading on meats, poultry or fish because it adds fat and calories and causes the food to soak up more fat if frying.
- ▲ Skip or reduce the amount of high-fat sauces or gravies added to meat.
- ▲ Prepare beans and peas without adding extra fat.

- ▲ Read the nutrition label on packaged foods for amounts of saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol and sodium.
- ▲ Pick a variety of proteins. Try having fish for lunch or dinner more often, especially fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout and herring.
- ▲ Use dry beans or peas as a main dish or side dish with meals.
- ▲ Eat nuts as a snack or to replace meat or poultry on salads or main dishes.

## KEEP FOODS SAFE

- ▲ Keep raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods separate.
- ▲ Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices will not drip onto other foods.
- ▲ Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- ▲ Do not wash or rinse meat or poultry.
- ▲ Use a food thermometer to measure internal temperatures. Cook foods to a safe temperature so microorganisms are killed.
- ▲ Defrost foods properly in a refrigerator or microwave. Never set food out on the counter to thaw.
- ▲ Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods within two hours.
- ▲ Avoid raw or partially cooked meat and eggs and foods containing raw or partially cooked eggs.
- ▲ Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children should avoid certain types of fish and only consume those with low mercury counts.

For more information on choosing foods from the meat and bean group, visit:  
[www.▲ChooseMyPlate.▲gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)

For more information about nutrition, food safety and health, visit  
[www.▲ag.▲ndsu.▲edu/food](http://www.▲ag.▲ndsu.▲edu/food)

## Try this example

The amount of food from the Protein Foods Group you need to eat depends on age, sex and level of physical activity. Most Americans eat enough food from this group, but need to make leaner and more varied selections of these foods. Recommended amounts are shown in the chart.

**Question:** How many 1-ounce servings of protein foods would a 25-year-old woman need every day? .....

|                 | Daily recommendation* |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Children</b> | 2 - 3 years old       | 2 ounce equivalents   |
|                 | 4 - 8 years old       | 3-4 ounce equivalents |
| <b>Girls</b>    | 9 - 13 years old      | 5 ounce equivalents   |
|                 | 14 - 18 years old     | 5 ounce equivalents   |
| <b>Boys</b>     | 9 - 13 years old      | 5 ounce equivalents   |
|                 | 14 - 18 years old     | 6 ounce equivalents   |
| <b>Women</b>    | 19 - 30 years old     | 5½ ounce equivalents  |
|                 | 31 - 50 years old     | 5 ounce equivalents   |
|                 | 51+ years old         | 5 ounce equivalents   |
| <b>Men</b>      | 19 - 30 years old     | 6½ ounce equivalents  |
|                 | 31 - 50 years old     | 6 ounce equivalents   |
|                 | 51+ years old         | 5½ ounce equivalents  |

\* These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs.

*Answer: 5½ ounce equivalents*

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### For more information on this and other topics, see [www.ndsu.edu/extension](http://www.ndsu.edu/extension)

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