10 tips Nutrition Education Series

with protein foods, variety is key



10 tips for choosing protein

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.

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

choose seafood twice a week
Eat seafood in place of meat or poultry
twice a week. Select a variety of
seafood—include some that are higher in
oils and low in mercury, such as salmon,
trout, and herring.



make meat and poultry lean or low fat Choose lean or low-fat cuts of meat like round or sirloin and ground beef that is at least 90% lean. Trim or drain fat from meat and remove poultry skin.

have an egg
One egg a day, on average, doesn't increase risk for heart disease, so make eggs part of your weekly choices. Only the egg yolk contains cholesterol and saturated fat, so have as many egg whites as you want.

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 naturally low in saturated fat and high 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.

nuts and seeds

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

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.

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.

think small when it comes to meat portions
Get the flavor you crave but in a smaller portion.

Make or order a smaller burger or a "petite" size steak.

check the sodium
Check the Nutrition Facts label to limit sodium.
Salt is added to many canned foods—including
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.

