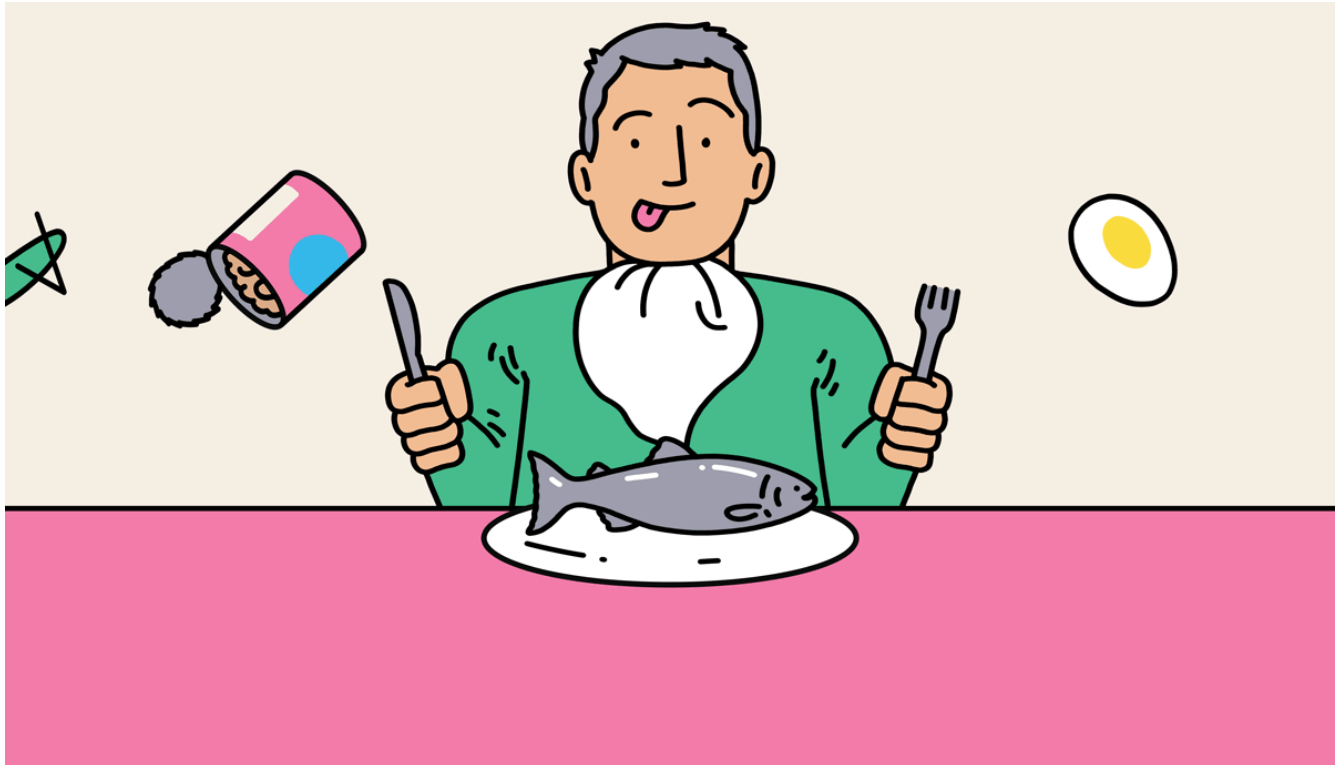


25 Great Ways to Get More Protein in Your Diet

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February 18, 2026



As we age, our bodies need a steady supply of protein. [A study published in 2024](#) examined the protein consumption of nearly 50,000 women over more than 30 years. It found that those who ate more protein of any kind saw some benefits, and those who consumed more plant protein in particular had fewer chronic illnesses and were healthier overall later in life.

“People think of the protein-muscle connection first, but we have protein in every single cell of our bodies,” says Michael Ormsbee, director of the Florida State University Institute of Sports Sciences and Medicine. “It’s in our signaling molecules, our hormones, the different connective tissue we have.”

Meanwhile, as you grow older, your body becomes less efficient at absorbing protein. When you’re 20 years old, eating 20 grams of protein can give your body what it needs, Ormsbee says. “But after age 40 and up, you probably need a doubling of that dose to have the same response.”

To combat these issues, experts recommend consuming 1 to 1.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily — that’s approximately 0.5 to 0.6 grams per pound. (The federal

government's [new food pyramid](#), released in January, recommends 1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight.)

These 25 tips can help you get enough protein each day.

1. Load up on protein at breakfast

The most popular breakfast items lean hard into carbohydrates: toast, muffins, cereal, pancakes, hash browns, donuts. But in 2020, [researchers found](#) that starting the day with a [protein-packed breakfast](#) boosted overall daily protein intake by 3.2 grams for men and 4.9 grams for women. [And a 2024 review](#) of 15 other studies found that a breakfast with about 0.1 grams of protein per pound of body weight — for a 150-pound person, that's 15 grams — could help build muscle, keep you satiated longer and reduce snacking throughout the day.

If you still want a carb-y breakfast while also getting more protein, cook your instant oatmeal with milk instead of water. Instead of 3 grams of protein, you'll get 7.

2. Sprinkle some seeds

Reach for these small but mighty morsels to add texture to salads, smoothies, oatmeal and anything else that could use a little crunch. A typical 3-tablespoon serving of hemp seeds will give you nearly [10 grams of protein](#), while an ounce of roasted pumpkin seeds [provides 8](#). One ounce of chia seeds — about 2 tablespoons — contains [almost 5 grams](#). You'll get 14 grams of protein in a single serving of this [Berry Chia Pudding](#).

Seeds offer more than just protein to boost your well-being as you age. Thanks to phytochemicals and omega-3 fatty acids, research shows that eating seeds regularly can protect your brain health, too.

3. Cook your greens

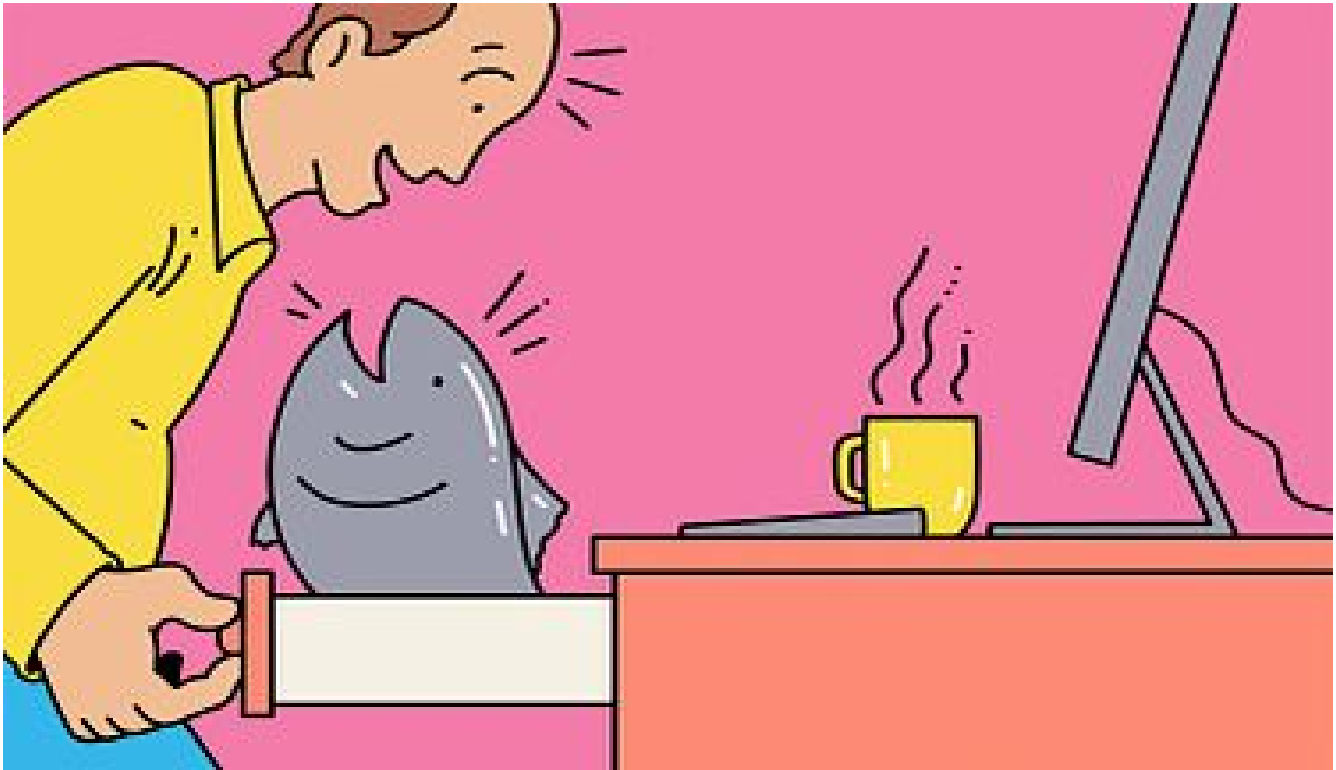
Greens such as spinach contain a lot of water, much of which evaporates in cooking. That concentrates the protein content. [According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), 1 cup of raw spinach gives you less than a gram of protein. But 1 cup of sautéed spinach (which is made from 6 cups or more of fresh spinach) provides [more than six times as much protein](#). (Use [garlic](#) and [olive oil](#) for your sauté to make it even healthier.) Plus, plant-based foods offer a host of other benefits, such as vitamins and antioxidants.

4. Swap sour cream for Greek yogurt

Plain Greek yogurt has sour cream's tangy, creamy flavor, but with a lot more protein. One hundred grams (about 3.5 ounces) of nonfat sour cream contains [just 3 grams of protein](#),

while the same amount of nonfat Greek yogurt contains [10](#). Greek yogurt is more versatile than sour cream, too. Use it in breakfast dishes, snacks and smoothies.

5. Store tuna in your desk



Stash some tuna in your desk. It's a quick and easy way to get some extra protein during the workday.

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This isn't as gross as it sounds — we're talking about those shelf-stable pouches, which often come pre-seasoned and can give you anywhere from 12 to 24 grams of protein, along with other heart-healthy benefits. "We want more omega-3s in our diet. Fish is a great source of that," says Joan Salge Blake, a dietitian and nutrition professor at Boston University and host of the nutrition and health podcast *Spot On!* "Pouches are ... a fabulous source of protein."

6. Add powdered milk

"You can add milk powder to pretty much anything," says Sandra Arévalo, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Put 2 tablespoons in your smoothie for an [extra 5 grams of protein](#). And because it provides more richness than flavor, she says, it gives a great behind-the-scenes boost to savory recipes. "You can add it to rice, you can add it to soups, you can add it to pastas," she says.

7. Try a new (to you) plant-based protein

If tofu feels old hat, expand your arsenal with tempeh and seitan. Tempeh, made from fermented soybeans, contains an impressive [34 grams of protein](#) per cup, and it can improve your gut health. Like tofu, tempeh comes in blocks. Cut it into pieces, steam it briefly, then marinate and bake it. Use atop grain bowls or in salads, sandwiches and tacos.

Seitan isn't soy-based; it's made from vital wheat gluten. Depending on the brand, a single serving can contain [15 to 25 grams of protein](#). Unadorned, it tastes mildly savory, but it soaks up other flavors like nobody's business. Thanks to its chewy, dense texture, it'll remind you of meat. Store-bought seitan comes precooked, so you can eat it straight from the package or swap it in for chicken or beef in recipes.

8. Get trendy with cottage cheese

The “dieter’s special” on diner menus has made a major comeback over the past few years, largely thanks to TikTok influencers bragging about their protein intake. They like cottage cheese because it contains an impressive [24 grams per cup](#), and its mild flavor lends itself to both sweet and savory dishes. If you haven't already jumped on the trend, try this three-ingredient, protein-packed [Cottage Cheese Snack Jar With Fruit](#).

9. Trade pretzels for roasted chickpeas

Craving something salty and crunchy? Shake up your snacking with a bag of roasted chickpeas (also known as chickpea snacks or crunchy chickpeas). A 1-ounce serving should provide around [6 grams of protein](#), along with 6 grams of fiber. Want to make your own? [It's easier than you think](#).

10. Put an egg on it



Eggs aren't just for breakfast anymore. You can drop them onto just about any dish.

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A single large egg provides more than [6 grams of protein](#). But think beyond breakfast: Add a soft-boiled egg to ramen, or slide an over-easy one onto avocado toast. For quick snacking, hard-boil a dozen eggs and refrigerate them; they'll stay fresh for a week, and you can reach for one or two when you need a nibble. If you're worried about eggs affecting your heart health, research shows that those old warnings may have missed the mark. A [2023 review](#) of high-quality studies found that including up to 14 eggs weekly in a varied diet could be beneficial for most people.

11. Batch-cook your favorites

Spend some weekend time cooking up a pound of [dried beans](#), roasting a second [chicken](#), preparing [roasted tofu](#) or [turkey meatballs](#), or another protein-forward option you enjoy. You'll have what you need to tuck into burritos and sandwiches, or to toss atop salads, pasta sauces and grain bowls. Here's a great make-ahead snack: Two of these mini-quiches will give you more than [13 grams of protein](#).

12. Experiment with ancient grains

Modern agricultural practices made grains like wheat and rice easier to grow in large volumes, but over time they've lost some nutritional content, namely minerals. [Ancient grains](#), on the other hand, remain largely unchanged, and many contain more protein than the everyday grains in your kitchen. Some, like quinoa, amaranth and kañiwa, are complete proteins, meaning they contain all the essential amino acids. Use them in side dishes like pilaf, or try pasta made from ancient wheats like spelt, einkorn or kamut.

13. Crack open a can of beans

[Recent research suggests](#) that replacing one or two servings of animal protein with canned beans can increase your intake of several essential nutrients, including fiber, potassium and iron. Bean soup is a no-brainer: One cup of lentil soup delivers [10 grams of protein](#), while a cup of canned black bean soup [provides 6](#). However, with the exception of soybeans, beans aren't complete proteins, so you'll need to pair them with another protein source, like whole grains, meat or nuts.

14. Use yogurt in your salad dressing

Here's a sneaky one that couldn't be simpler: Replace the mayo or sour cream in your creamy salad dressing with plain Greek yogurt. Two tablespoons, the usual serving size for dressing, contain around [3 grams of protein](#) — that's 10 times [as much as ranch](#) or [creamy poppy seed](#) made the usual way.

15. Go retro with a shrimp cocktail



Class up your protein intake with a shrimp cocktail (pearls are optional).

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A 3-ounce portion of shrimp (that's eight or nine medium ones) has [20 grams of protein](#) and just 84 calories. If you keep a package of cooked shrimp in the freezer and a jar of cocktail sauce on hand, you can enjoy a sweet, briny and zingy treat in minutes. Just defrost the shrimp under cool running water and pat them dry.

16. Broaden your food horizons

Whether for convenience, affordability or personal preference, people tend to winnow down their shopping lists as they age. “Unfortunately, as you get older, it’s well described that one tends to have a lower array of foods,” says Hope Barkoukis, chair of the nutrition department at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. “And that really increases your risk of not getting all of the vitamins and minerals that you need.”

Because so many foods contain small amounts of protein, eating a more diverse diet helps you boost your intake, especially as you get older. According to a [2025 review of studies](#) in *BMC Nutrition*, people who ate more protein through a wide range of foods were less likely to experience sarcopenia, the loss of muscle mass that comes with aging. “The easiest way for someone who’s not inclined to research would be simply to eat a variety of plant-based

foods,” says Ormsbee. “You’ll cover your bases if you’re not eating the same things over and over.”

17. Pack some trail mix

This combo of nuts and other shelf-stable munchies is the ultimate grab-and-go snack, and it’s an easy way to add protein to your day. One ounce of a nut-heavy mixture has almost [6 grams of protein](#), while versions heavy on the chocolate can have [considerably less](#). For a three-ingredient option you can make at home, check out this [Fruit & Nut Popcorn Trail Mix](#). It takes about a minute to throw together and gives you 5 grams of protein per serving.

18. Blend in silken tofu

You don’t have to be a vegan to appreciate this soft and jiggly plant-based protein’s versatility. When blended, it becomes a perfectly creamy, phytonutrient-packed base for dips, sauces and other savory dishes, as well as sweet treats like puddings, mousses and cheesecakes. With about [4 grams of protein](#) per serving plus an array of nutrients that come with plant-based foods, silken tofu could be your next go-to.

If you’ve never used it before, start with something simple, like this [Strawberry-Almond Smoothie](#).

19. Pick the right shortcuts

We all have times when we can’t stop to prepare a nutritious meal or snack. That’s when you reach for a [protein bar](#) or powder — but it’s important to know that some aren’t as healthy as they may seem. When choosing a bar, Arévalo says to read the ingredient list and make sure it’s A) relatively brief, and B) made of foods you recognize. Manufacturers may add so much sugar, fat or artificial ingredients that they may be no better for you than candy. Ormsbee uses protein powders regularly, “predominantly because it’s convenient,” he says. “Everyone’s got chaotic lifestyles, and for me, it’s a convenience factor that I am totally comfortable with, and enjoy, and have access to.”

To make sure you’re getting what the label promises, look for third-party testing certification on the package. Organizations that Ormsbee trusts include NSF, Informed Choice and Informed Sport.

20. Bug out



Don't freak out about eating insects. Turns out they're packed with protein — and people have been feasting on them for centuries.

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When it comes to sustainable proteins, insects are pretty high on the list. It takes [2,000 times less water](#) than beef cattle to produce the same amount of cricket protein. While dishes made with bugs are still uncommon in the U.S., humans have been [eating them for thousands of years](#). Still, nobody's saying you need to eat grasshopper tacos, though they are a traditional food in Oaxaca, Mexico. Pay attention in the functional foods aisle and you'll notice more and more high-protein snacks, bars and baked goods made with cricket flour.

21. Make things creamy with evaporated skim milk

Evaporated skim milk has had much of its water content cooked out, leaving behind a thicker liquid with more protein than fresh skim milk: [19 grams](#) per cup [versus 8](#). It offers more than twice the calcium, too. And unlike sweetened condensed milk, evaporated skim milk has no added sugar. Reach for a can to make extra-creamy mac and cheese, to replace heavy cream in soups and sauces, or to swap for coconut milk in curries.

22. Delight your inner child with string cheese

The budget-friendly lunch-box staple has genuine adult appeal: Depending on the brand, a single 1-ounce stick provides anywhere from 6 to 11 grams of protein. As a dairy protein, it possesses all the essential amino acids, and you'll also get a nice shot of calcium. Keep a package in the fridge for snack time, and if you want to serve it with carrot sticks and animal crackers like your mom did, we'll never tell.

23. Embrace edamame

Did you know that edamame is whole green soybeans? Since soy is the only bean that's a complete protein, it makes sense to stash a bag in your freezer. Steam them whole in the pod, toss with some flaky salt and munch. For every four or five pods you eat (the beans, of course, not the fibrous pod), you'll get [1 gram of protein](#).

24. Pick up a jar of nooch

Think of nutritional yeast, a.k.a. nooch or yeast flakes, as a vegan Parmesan. This inactivated strain of yeast has an umami-rich nuttiness reminiscent of the cheese, and it may be the best popcorn seasoning you'll ever taste. Plus, it's simply packed with protein. One popular brand contains [8 grams](#) in a 1.5-tablespoon serving. But don't just use it on popcorn: Sprinkle nooch into salad dressings or on roasted vegetables, in mashed potatoes or on pasta, or anywhere else you'd normally toss a little Parm.

25. Enjoy a protein-heavy midnight snack

"From the day you're born until the day you die, your body is breaking down protein in your body as well as building with it," Barkoukis says. "Sleep is a long stretch of time when you're not consuming anything but your body is still breaking down that protein." [Studies show](#) that eating 40 grams of protein before bed helps your body repair and build muscle while you sleep. That's a substantial portion, so unless you see yourself eating an entire chicken breast before you turn out the lights, stir a scoop of protein powder into a container of Greek yogurt — even the yogurt alone would be a smart bet, since [research suggests it'll help you sleep better](#).