

What is protein?

Proteins, like fats and carbohydrates, are chemicals found in food that are necessary for life. They are particularly important in muscle and some plants store energy as protein (e.g. legumes). Without the right proteins in the diet, growth, repair and many other functions in the human body would not happen.

Protein is made up of 'building blocks' called amino acids of which there are twenty-two. Eight of these are 'essential' as the human body cannot make them, so we have to have different proteins in our diet.

Eggs and other animal sources of protein contain all the building blocks (amino acids) whereas individual vegetable and plant proteins do not have all the essential building blocks, therefore different combinations of grains and beans need to be eaten to get them all.

Beware! - protein foods from animals can be associated with high levels of fat and so the total energy content of the food is very high.

Examples of good combinations of vegetable sources of protein:

- Baked beans on toast (wholemeal best)
- Beans and rice
- Sweetcorn on toast (wholemeal best)
- Lentils and rice

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Protein and fat content of food

Meat and Alternatives	Choose those with ✓	Fat (Grams)	Protein (Grams)
Sausages, fried (150 grams = 2 large)	X	37	20
Bacon, grilled (40 grams = 2 rashers)	X	25	6
Steak, fried in butter (150 grams)	X	20	40
Steak, grilled (150 grams)	✓	12	39
Mince, beef, top side (150 grams)	✓	15	36
Lamb chops, grilled (150 grams)	✓	13	42
Luncheon, 2 slices (50 grams)	X	8	6
Chicken, rotisserie (150 grams)	X	18	36
Chicken wings (4 wings = 90 grams)	✓	9	23
Chicken breast skinless (150 grams)	✓	7	42
Tuna, tinned in oil (150 grams = 3/4 tin)	X	35	34
Tuna, tinned in brine/water (150 grams)	✓	4	39
Salmon, tinned in brine/water (150 grams)	✓	8	31
Fish, battered, fried (150 grams)	X	30	35
Fish, baked/steamed/microwaved (150 grams)	✓	1.5	33
Egg, fried (2 eggs = 100 grams)	X	20	15
Egg, boiled (2 eggs = 100 grams)	✓	10	13
Soya beans, boiled (150 grams)	✓	9	12
Lentils, boiled (150 grams)	✓	1	11
Baked beans in tomato sauce (200 grams)	✓	0.7	9
Milk, blue top (250ml)	X	8.5	8
Milk, trim (250ml)	✓	1.5	11
Yoghurt, regular, plain/fruit flavoured (150 grams)	✓	3-6	7
Ice-cream, plain vanilla (1 cup = 145 grams)	X	16	6
Cheese, Cheddar/Colby (40 grams)	X	14	9
Edam (40 grams)	✓	10	11
Processed cheese slices, reduced fat (2 slices = 40 grams)	✓	4-5	9
Cottage cheese (40 grams)	✓	1.5	5.5
Takeaways			
KFC (2 chicken thighs)	X	45	30.5
Big Mac	X	32	27
Fish, battered (1 piece)	X	30	22
Saveloy, battered (1 sausage)	X	29	16
Milk shake (400 ml)	X	9	13

Suggestion:

- Refer to the Traffic Light resource (green page) for sources of good protein including meat/eggs/beans/legumes/lean cuts. Cut the fat before cooking and remove the skin
- **Fish:** Aim for 3 portions per week
- **Dairy Products:** Aim for 2+ low fat portions/day