

## PROTEIN: PRIORITIZE IT!

By Julie Cottrell, MS, RD, LD

You may hear advice to do “Meatless Mondays” and/or to eat less animal foods overall. Is this message correct? Should we choose more plant-based proteins and decrease those from animal sources? Hopefully, this handout will clarify some reasons why humans need protein, and why **protein from animal sources is particularly beneficial**. As with all food choices, emphasis will also be placed on choosing quality sources. Also important is the humane treatment of animals as well as respect for the environment.


**Let's start by looking at this Healthline article: [10 Science-Backed Reasons to Eat More Protein](#).**

Scan this list to see if any of these reasons for eating more protein make sense for you. Click on the link above (in blue) to read more about each one.

- ❖ reduces appetite and hunger levels
- ❖ increases muscle mass and strength
- ❖ good for your bones
- ❖ boosts metabolism and increases fat burning
- ❖ reduces cravings and desire for late-night snacking
- ❖ lowers your blood pressure
- ❖ helps maintain weight loss
- ❖ does not harm healthy kidneys
- ❖ helps your body repair itself after injury
- ❖ helps you stay fit as you age

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT PROTEIN FOODS?	Table 1. Dietary Requirements for Amino Acids in Humans	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Protein is made up of <b>amino acids</b>. There are 20 different amino acids (see chart for reference).</li> <li>❖ Amino acids are the <b>building blocks</b> that we use to make muscles, tissues, organs, bone, hormones, enzymes, neurotransmitters, etc.</li> <li>❖ We must eat <b>protein-rich foods</b> to get these amino acids into our bodies.</li> </ul>	Essential	
	Nonessential	
	Histidine	Alanine
	Isoleucine	Arginine
	Leucine	Asparagine
	Lysine	Aspartate
	Methionine	Cysteine
	Phenylalanine	Glutamate
	Threonine	Glutamine
	Tryptophan	Glycine
	Valine	Proline
		Serine
		Tyrosine

### VISUAL ENCOURAGEMENT

<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">The 29 Best Sources of Protein for Weight Loss</a> From “Eat This, Not That”</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Click on the link above (in blue) to view the list.</li> <li>❖ Includes veggies and fruits highest in protein in addition to animal sources.</li> <li>❖ Also includes some unusual sources; may inspire you to try some new foods!</li> <li>❖ Good visuals and comments; solid information provided.</li> </ul>	

#### **Cautions from Julie:**

- ❖ Please ignore the opening commentary regarding the FDA’s definition of “high protein”, which is based on a deplorably low goal of 50 grams/day; we need much more protein than this to function optimally.
- ❖ The advice to choose white meat over dark does help reduce calories and fat content; however, you don’t always have to follow this advice.
- ❖ Be careful with some of the rabbit-hole links; I do not agree with or endorse many of these other articles (the “healthy yogurt” and smoothie ones are examples; too many carbs and sugars in most of the highlighted products and recipes).

## LIST OF 22 LEAN PROTEIN SOURCES

from BistroMD

Here is another quick visual reference for quality lean protein sources. Animal sources top the list, but some non-animal sources are also named. Scan the list to see if you are already choosing many of these; and click on [this link](#) to learn more about any on the list:



## SOURCES OF LEAN PROTEIN

Protein is key to maintain muscle and lose fat.

And here are 22 protein sources to do just that!

1. chicken *17 grams per 3 ounces*
2. grass-fed beef *17 grams per 3 ounces*
3. ground turkey *18 grams per 3 ounces*
4. pork tenderloin *26 grams per 3 ounces*
5. bison *21 grams per 3 ounces*
6. venison *19 grams per 3 ounces*
7. jerky *13 grams per 1 ounce*
8. eggs *6 grams per 1 medium egg*
9. canned tuna *20 grams per 3 ounces*
10. salmon *19 grams per 3 ounces*
11. shrimp *19 grams per 3 ounces*
12. black beans *8 grams per 1/2 cup*
13. chickpeas *7 grams per 1/2 cup*
14. lentils *9 grams per 1/2 cup*
15. quinoa *8 grams per 1 cup*
16. milk *8 grams per 8 fluid ounces*
17. cottage cheese *13 grams per 1/2 cup*
18. greek yogurt *20 grams per 1 cup*
19. edamame *22 grams per 1 cup*
20. tofu *20 grams per 1 cup*
21. tempeh *31 grams per 1 cup*
22. whey protein *26 grams per 1 scoop*



## BUDGET CONCERNS

It's fair to say that we would ALL like to spend the least amount possible on our foods. Protein foods often cost more than "junk food"; as we attempt to include more protein in our plan, concerns about the budget are valid.

Here are some tips to help:

- ❑ **Minimize overall expenses** by NOT buying foods that mostly supply calories - but have little nutrition value - like sugary drinks, potato chips, cookies and other low-quality items.
- ❑ **Eat fewer meals/day.** This may naturally happen because protein is so much more satiating than sugar. Many people skip breakfast and wait for brunch or lunch + dinner and maybe one quality snack. This is not only good for your budget, but good for your metabolism too!
- ❑ Some **higher protein foods that may cost less** include: canned tuna or chicken; sardines; eggs; ground beef; cottage cheese.
- ❑ **More tips** can be found in this Healthline article: [17 Cheap and Healthy Sources of Protein.](#)

## PROTEIN QUALITY

- ❖ **Buy the highest quality protein sources you can access and afford.**
- ❖ Choose products from animals that have been eating a species-appropriate diet, and that have lived a reasonably natural life.
- ❖ When possible, choose **grass-fed beef, organic/free-range chicken, pastured eggs, and wild-caught seafood.** These would be the BEST sources, but aren't always accessible where you shop or based on your budget.
- ❖ **When buying lower quality meat, choose lower fat, leaner cuts.** The fat in these animals won't be as healthy, so leaner is better. You can add healthy fats to it as you cook/prepare it.

## OTHER RESOURCES

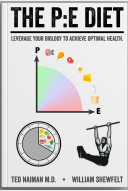
### **CORNUCOPIA SCORECARDS**

When shopping for organic foods, you may wish to consult this resource to help select products that get the best ratings. Go to [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org) to find scorecards that rank organic foods based on a variety of criteria. Compare brands you like and that you can find locally.

**SCORECARDS** are available for: **Poultry, Cottage Cheese, Yogurt, Plant-Based Beverages, Dairy, Snack Bar, Toothpaste, Eggs, Cereal and Soy.**

### **PROTEIN-FOCUSED EATING - LISTEN AND LEARN FROM EXPERTS IN THE FIELD**

Many doctors, dietitians and researchers are now embracing the idea of a “protein-centered” eating plan as a way to improve health. Meals are based around quality protein sources; this provides a nutrient-dense diet, promotes lean body mass, and is high in satiety value. To learn more about many of the unique benefits of protein, here are some outstanding resources:

<p><b><u>Ted Naiman, MD</u></b> Dr. Naiman is a family practice physician and author of “The P:E Diet”; he can be found at <a href="http://www.tednaiman.com">www.tednaiman.com</a> and on a variety of podcasts. His graphics are outstanding and easily convey his ideas. <a href="#">This podcast</a> will explain much more about his approach of comparing the relative amount of protein energy vs fat + carb energy from any given food. Eating foods with a higher “P:E value” leads to greater satiety and less food energy requirements.</p>	
<p><b><u>Podcast with Mark Sisson, Paul Saladino, MD, and Shawn Baker, MD</u></b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to listen to a brilliant conversation between these thought-leaders regarding the role of dietary protein in our health and longevity. You won’t regret listening to this one!</p>	
<p><b><u>Stu Phillips, PhD</u></b> Stu is a well-respected researcher, professor and authority on dietary protein. Listen to <a href="#">this podcast</a> to learn more about how much to eat as well as the many benefits of protein, including for the aging population.</p>	
<p><b><u>Donald Layman, PhD</u></b> A professor and researcher for &gt;30 years, his research led him to a “protein-centric” approach. Listen to <a href="#">this YouTube interview</a> to learn about protein for weight loss and healthy aging, in addition to many other benefits.</p>	
<p><b><u>Gabriel Lyons, MD:</u></b> Dr. Lyons trained under professor Donald Layman; she also completed extensive medical training in geriatrics. Her focus is preventing metabolic disease and promoting healthy aging by consuming adequate protein (1 gram/pound ideal body weight) using “Muscle-Centric Medicine”. She has a YouTube channel and as a guest on many podcasts; here is a link to her <a href="#">website</a>.</p>	