

How much protein do you need for weight loss and muscle growth?

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(HealthDay)—Low-carb, vegetarian, Mediterranean—whatever your

diet, it's important to get enough protein.

Although research hasn't yet pinpointed one perfect formula, experts say that the typical "recommended" daily minimums aren't optimal, and that it helps to factor in your weight and activity level to determine how much protein *you* personally need.

A good baseline for people who exercise at a moderate level is between one-half and three-quarters of a gram of protein per pound of bodyweight. If you weigh 150 pounds, for example, eat between 75 and 112 grams of protein per day. To lose weight, diets with higher amounts of protein—between 90 and 150 grams a day—are effective and help keep you from losing muscle along with fat.

Since the body uses protein most effectively when you have it at [regular intervals](#), divide your daily intake into four equal amounts for breakfast, lunch, a snack and dinner. If you work out at a high level, consider eating another 50 grams of protein before you go to bed to help with overnight muscle repair.

You might be familiar with calorie counting, but it's also important to know how to tally your protein intake. While one ounce of chicken weighs 28 grams, it contains only about 9 grams of protein. So it takes a 3-ounce portion to deliver 27 grams of protein, or about one-quarter of the average daily need.

27-Gram Protein Portions

- 3 ounces of fish, turkey, chicken or lean beef
- 7 ounces plain Greek yogurt
- 3/4 cup cottage cheese

You can also get high-quality [protein](#) from some plant-based foods. These include tofu, whole grains, legumes and nuts—all better options than eating extra red meat or any processed meats.

More information: The USDA has more on [high-protein foods](#) and how to choose wisely.

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