

What foods are in the Protein Foods Group?

All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Beans and peas are also part of the Vegetable Group..

Select a variety of protein foods to improve nutrient intake and health benefits, including at least 8 ounces of cooked seafood per week. Young children need less, depending on their age and calories needs. The advice to consume seafood does not apply to vegetarians. Vegetarian options in the Protein Foods Group include beans and peas, processed soy products, and nuts and seeds. Meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat.

Some commonly eaten choices in the Protein Foods Group, with selection tips, are:

Meats*

Lean cuts of:

beef
ham
lamb
pork
veal

Game meats:

bison
rabbit
venison

Lean ground meats:

beef
pork
lamb

Lean luncheon or deli meats

Organ meats:

liver
giblets

Poultry*

Beans and peas

black beans
black-eyed peas
chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
falafel
kidney beans
lentils
lima beans (mature)
navy beans
pinto beans
soy beans
split peas

Processed soy products:

tofu (bean curd made from

soybeans)

white beans

bean burgers

veggie burgers

tempeh

texturized vegetable protein (TVP)

Seafood*

Finfish such as:

catfish
cod
flounder
haddock
halibut
herring
mackerel
pollock
porgy
salmon
sea bass
snapper
swordfish
trout
tuna

Shellfish such as:

clams
crab
crayfish
lobster
mussels
octopus
oysters

chicken
duck
goose
turkey
ground chicken and
turkey

Eggs*
chicken eggs
duck eggs

Nuts and seeds*
almonds
cashews
hazelnuts (filberts)
mixed nuts
peanuts
peanut butter
pecans
pistachios
pumpkin seeds
sesame seeds
sunflower seeds
walnuts

scallops
squid (calamari)
shrimp
Canned fish such as:
anchovies
clams
tuna
sardines

***Selection Tips**

Choose lean or low-fat meat and poultry. If higher fat choices are made, such as regular ground beef (75 to 80% lean) or chicken with skin, the fat counts against your maximum limit for empty calories (calories from solid fats or added sugars).

If solid fat is added in cooking, such as frying chicken in shortening or frying eggs in butter or stick margarine, this also counts against your maximum limit for empty calories (calories from solid fats and added sugars).

Select some seafood that is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, sardines, anchovies, herring, Pacific oysters, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel.

Processed meats such as ham, sausage, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added sodium. Check the Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake. Fresh chicken, turkey, and pork that have been enhanced with a salt-containing solution also have added sodium. Check the product label for statements such as "self-basting" or "contains up to ___% of ___", which mean that a sodium-containing solution has been added to the product.

Choose unsalted nuts and seeds to keep sodium intake low.

Why is it important to make lean or low-fat choices from the Protein Foods Group?

Foods in the meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, and seed group provide nutrients that are vital for health and maintenance of your body. However, choosing foods from this group that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol may have health implications.

Nutrients

- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans and peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds supply many nutrients. These include protein, B vitamins (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, and B6), vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium.
- Proteins function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood. They are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins. Proteins are one of three nutrients that provide calories (the others are fat and carbohydrates).
- B vitamins found in this food group serve a variety of functions in the body. They help the body release energy, play a vital role in the function of the nervous system, aid in the formation of red blood cells, and help build tissues.
- Iron is used to carry oxygen in the blood. Many teenage girls and women in their child-bearing years have iron-deficiency anemia. They should eat foods high in heme-iron (meats) or eat other non-heme iron containing foods along with a food rich in vitamin C, which can improve absorption of non-heme iron.
- Magnesium is used in building bones and in releasing energy from muscles.
- Zinc is necessary for biochemical reactions and helps the immune system function properly.
- EPA and DHA are omega-3 fatty acids found in varying amounts in seafood. Eating 8 ounces per week of seafood may help reduce the risk for heart disease.

Health implications

- Diets that are high in saturated fats raise “bad” cholesterol levels in the blood. The “bad” cholesterol is called LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol. High LDL cholesterol, in turn,

increases the risk for coronary heart disease. Some food choices in this group are high in saturated fat. These include fatty cuts of beef, pork, and lamb; regular (75% to 85% lean) ground beef; regular sausages, hot dogs, and bacon; some luncheon meats such as regular bologna and salami; and some poultry such as duck. To help keep blood cholesterol levels healthy, limit the amount of these foods you eat.

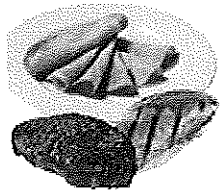
- Diets that are high in cholesterol can raise LDL cholesterol levels in the blood. Cholesterol is only found in foods from animal sources. Some foods from this group are high in cholesterol. These include egg yolks (egg whites are cholesterol-free) and organ meats such as liver and giblets. To help keep blood cholesterol levels healthy, limit the amount of these foods you eat.
- A high intake of fats makes it difficult to avoid consuming more calories than are needed.

Why is it important to eat 8 ounces of seafood per week?

- Seafood contains a range of nutrients, notably the omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA. Eating about 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood contributes to the prevention of heart disease. Smaller amounts of seafood are recommended for young children.
- Seafood varieties that are commonly consumed in the United States that are higher in EPA and DHA and lower in mercury include salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel (*not* king mackerel, which is high in mercury). The health benefits from consuming seafood outweigh the health risk associated with mercury, a heavy metal found in seafood in varying levels.

What are the benefits of eating nuts and seeds?

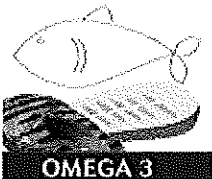
- Eating peanuts and certain tree nuts (i.e., walnuts, almonds, and pistachios) may reduce the risk of heart disease when consumed as part of a diet that is nutritionally adequate and within calorie needs. Because nuts and seeds are high in calories, eat them in small portions and use them to replace other protein foods, like some meat or poultry, rather than adding them to what you already eat. In addition, choose unsalted nuts and seeds to help reduce sodium intakes.



Tips to help you make wise choices from the Protein Foods Group

Go lean with protein:

- Start with a lean choice:
 - The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (eye of round, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts.
 - The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham.
 - Choose extra lean ground beef. The label should say at least "90% lean." You may be able to find ground beef that is 93% or 95% lean.
 - Buy skinless chicken parts, or take off the skin before cooking.
 - Boneless skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices.
 - Choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham, or low-fat luncheon meats for sandwiches instead of luncheon/deli meats with more fat, such as regular bologna or salami.
- Keep it lean:
 - Trim away all of the visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking.
 - Broil, grill, roast, poach, or boil meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying.
 - Drain off any fat that appears during cooking.
 - Skip or limit the breading on meat, poultry, or fish. Breading adds calories. It will also cause the food to soak up more fat during frying.
 - Prepare beans and peas without added fats.
 - Choose and prepare foods without high fat sauces or gravies.



Vary your protein choices:

- Choose seafood at least twice a week as the main protein food. Look for seafood rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, and herring. Some ideas are:
 - Salmon steak or filet
 - Salmon loaf
 - Grilled or baked trout



- Choose beans, peas, or soy products as a main dish or part of a meal often. Some choices are:
 - Chili with kidney or pinto beans
 - Stir-fried tofu
 - Split pea, lentil, minestrone, or white bean soups
 - Baked beans
 - Black bean enchiladas
 - Garbanzo or kidney beans on a chef's salad
 - Rice and beans
 - Veggie burgers
 - Hummus (chickpeas) spread on pita bread
- Choose unsalted nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to these items:
 - Use pine nuts in pesto sauce for pasta.
 - Add slivered almonds to steamed vegetables.
 - Add toasted peanuts or cashews to a vegetable stir fry instead of meat.
 - Sprinkle a few nuts on top of low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt.
 - Add walnuts or pecans to a green salad instead of cheese or meat.

What to look for on the Food Label:

- Check the Nutrition Facts label for the saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and sodium content of packaged foods.
 - Processed meats such as hams, sausages, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added sodium. Check the ingredient and Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake.
 - Fresh chicken, turkey, and pork that have been enhanced with a salt-containing solution also have added sodium. Check the product label for statements such as "self-basting" or "contains up to ___% of ___."
 - Lower fat versions of many processed meats are available. Look on the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less fat and saturated fat.

Keep it safe to eat:

- Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- Do not wash or rinse meat or poultry.

- Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and counter tops in hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next one.
- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices don't drip onto other foods.
- Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms. Use a meat thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through.
- Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- Plan ahead to defrost foods. Never defrost food on the kitchen counter at room temperature. Thaw food by placing it in the refrigerator, submerging air-tight packaged food in cold tap water (change water every 30 minutes), or defrosting on a plate in the microwave.
- Avoid raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs and raw or undercooked meat and poultry.
- Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children should avoid some types of fish and eat types lower in mercury. See www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD for more information.