

Menopause & Protein

Cheat Sheet

How Much Protein?

As we age, our bodies become less responsive to smaller protein doses. To stimulate muscle protein synthesis, we need more protein per meal and per day than younger adults.

Suggested Optimal Daily Protein Intake (g/kg body weight)

Group	Age	Protein Intake	Notes
Active women	Any age	0.64-1.0 g/lb (1.4-2.2 g/kg)	Optimal for women strength training or staying active; supports recovery and hormone balance.
Sedentary women in perimenopause / postmenopause	~45-64	0.55-0.73 g/lb (1.2-1.6 g/kg)	Helps preserve lean muscle, supports bone health, and maintains metabolic rate.
Sedentary older women	65+	0.55-0.91 g/lb (1.2-2.0 g/kg)	Higher end supports muscle and bone density in later postmenopause; spread evenly across meals.
Active women in early menopause (returning to training or building strength)	45-55	0.73-1.0 g/lb (1.6-2.2 g/kg)	Pair with resistance training to rebuild or maintain muscle during hormonal transition.

A good per-meal target for most women: 25-35 grams of protein.

Prioritize minimally processed proteins when practical (e.g., pork tenderloin vs. hot dogs).

DON'T LOVE MATH? SIMPLIFY WITH HAND PORTIONS

A quick, no-scale method:

Protein = palm

- One palm-sized portion of protein \approx 20-35 grams.
- Most women need 3-6 palms per day, or 1-2 per meal.¹⁵
- Spreading protein evenly (about 25-40 grams per meal) maximizes muscle protein synthesis.

What to Eat: Protein-Rich Foods

It's important to note that some foods are high in protein, while others have moderate protein. Here's a list of high-protein foods, their serving sizes, and approximate protein per serving.

Protein-Rich Foods

High-Protein Food	Serving Size	Approx. Protein (g)
Chicken breast (cooked)	4-5 oz (115-140 g)	30-35 g
Salmon	4 oz (115 g)	28 g
Lean ground beef	4 oz (115 g)	30 g
Pork tenderloin	4 oz (115 g)	26 g
Turkey breast	4 oz (115 g)	30 g
Greek yogurt (plain, nonfat)	1 1/2 cups (350 g)	30-35 g
Cottage cheese (low fat)	1 cup (220 g)	24 g
Tofu (extra-firm)	7 oz (200 g)	20 g
Tempeh	4 oz (115 g)	22 g
Lentils (cooked)	1 1/2 cups (300 g)	26 g
Edamame (shelled, cooked)	1 1/2 cups (230 g)	28 g
Protein powder (whey or plant-based)	1 scoop (30-35 g)	20-25 g
Eggs (whole) + egg whites	2 eggs + 3 whites	25 g
Milk (cow's, 2%)	2 cups (480 mL)	16 g
Shrimp	4 oz (115 g)	24 g
Seitan	3 oz (85 g)	21 g
Quinoa (cooked)	1 1/2 cups (300 g)	12-14 g
Chickpea or lentil pasta (cooked)	1 cup (180 g)	20-25 g
Pea protein milk	1 cup (240 mL)	8 g
Palm-sized portion of meat/fish	~4 oz (115 g)	25-35 g
Palm-sized portion of tofu	~4 oz (115 g)	21-24 g

What About Protein Powder?

Protein powders can help boost your daily protein intake, and often contain a number of other important nutrients. Read labels carefully when choosing a protein powder, and look for one with minimal ingredients that's been tested for quality by a third-party lab. Websites such as ConsumerLab.com and Labdoor.com have test results.

Animal-Sourced Options	Plant-Based Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whey • Casein • Egg/egg white • Beef isolate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemp protein • Rice protein • Pea protein • Pumpkin seed protein • Vegan protein blends

Plant-Based Protein Options

If you prefer a fully plant-based diet, try to eat several different sources of protein throughout the day, such as:

Beans and legumes - or foods derived from them, such as:

- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Bean pasta

Higher-protein whole grains, such as:

- Quinoa
- Amaranth
- Steel-cut or whole oats
- Teff
- Buckwheat
- Brown or wild rice

Many people assume that nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters are good sources of protein. In fact, these are mainly fat sources. They're nutritious and delicious, but check the labels to see how much protein each choice includes.

Simple Ways to Get Enough Protein

- Start meals with a protein anchor (eggs, tofu, fish, yogurt bowl).
- Add beans/lentils to soups, salads, or pasta.
- Use Greek yogurt/cottage cheese for snacks.
- Choose lentil/chickpea pasta or add edamame to grain bowls.
- Keep ready-to-go options: jerky, protein shakes, roasted chickpeas.

Things to Consider

With a higher-protein diet, there are a few things you should consider depending on your situation.

- **Variety is the spice of life:** You aren't stuck eating chicken breast. Try various types of poultry, fish and other seafood, lean red meat... even a low to moderate intake of processed/fatty meats (bacon, sausage, fatty beef/lamb, full-fat cheese) is fine within the context of a balanced diet.
- **If you don't eat meat:**
 - Include eggs and dairy if you use them; pescatarians can add fish/seafood.
 - Fully plant-based? Combine higher-protein options across the day: tofu, tempeh, soy/pea protein, bean-based pastas, and higher-protein grains (quinoa, amaranth, steel-cut oats, teff, buckwheat, brown/wild rice).

If you're not used to eating much protein, start where you are and slowly add more into your diet. Add one palm of protein to one meal/day, build to two meals, then most meals.

Common Myths About Protein and Menopause

Myth 1: “Too much protein is bad for your kidneys.”

For healthy women, higher-protein diets are safe. Kidney concerns mainly apply to those with pre-existing disease.

Myth 2: “Protein makes women bulky.”

Women’s lower testosterone levels make significant muscle gain unlikely. Protein helps preserve muscle mass, which is especially important during the menopause transition.

Myth 3: “Plant-based eaters can’t get enough protein.”

They can - with smart choices, variety and planning. Combine legumes, soy, and grains to meet protein needs.

Myth 4: “I’m not training hard, so I don’t need much protein.”

Even if you don’t lift weights, protein supports bone, immune, and metabolic health.

KEEP IT SIMPLE AND REALISTIC

Perfection isn’t required.

Choose one upgrade (e.g., adding a palm size serving of protein at breakfast), repeat it consistently, then build from there.

Your body is adaptable - and you’re allowed to take it at a realistic pace.