

# Small Steps Can Help Ensure Your Fitness Goals

## Muscle Matters for Your Health at Any Age

Strong and healthy muscles and bones support you every day, and you can support them by eating nutrient-rich foods and getting regular exercise.\* Small steps could help you reap benefits you may not realize you can gain. No matter what age you are, it's particularly important to establish good nutrition, lifestyle and physical activity habits to help pave a path for strong muscles and bones.

Consuming high-quality protein and participating in resistance exercise, such as lifting weights, can help build muscle, which is important for strength. Maintaining your muscle contributes to health and well-being.

**Whether your goal is maintaining a toned and healthy body or aging healthfully, protein can benefit your active lifestyle:**

- **Build more lean muscle** – a **higher protein diet** in combination with resistance exercise can help build healthy muscles and support weight management.
- **Reduce muscle loss during aging** – protein can help preserve muscle as you age.
- **Enhance muscle recovery after resistance exercise or weight training:**
  - *If you're a regular exerciser* – consuming high-quality dairy protein may help nourish your muscles after a tough workout.
  - *If you're a serious athlete* – consuming carbohydrates and high-quality dairy protein together, after intense exercise, may enhance the replenishment of muscle energy stores to help faster recovery in preparation for your next workout.



### FAQ:

#### What is protein?

Protein is an essential nutrient (like fat and carbohydrate) your body needs each day. Not all proteins are equal – quality can make a difference. High-quality protein foods make it easy for you to get all of the essential amino acids your body needs to build and maintain muscles and help your body work properly.

#### What are high-quality proteins?

Dairy foods such as milk, flavored milk, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt and Greek-style yogurt are good sources of high-quality protein.\*\* High-quality protein provides all the essential amino acids your body can't make on its own. The high-quality protein found in foods such as dairy foods, eggs, lean beef and pork, skinless poultry, fish and soy offers convenient options to help you meet your protein needs.

– For more information, see ***Protein: Understanding the Basics***.

#### How can I get the benefits of protein?

- Incorporate dairy protein into daily meals, snacks and after your workouts.
- Look for protein on the nutrition facts label and ingredients list of your favorite foods.†
- Enjoy foods and beverages containing whey protein, such as your favorite protein bar or shake, which can be found at grocery and health food stores.

#### Did You Know?

- Dietary protein is an essential nutrient for bone health.
- There's more than just calcium needed to make strong bones – protein plays a role, too, and dairy foods provide both of these key nutrients.††
  - In addition to protein, dairy foods (milk, cheese and yogurt) are important sources of calcium, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, vitamins A, D and B<sub>12</sub> and riboflavin in the U.S. diet.

Get recipes that include protein at [wheyprotein.nationaldairyCouncil.org](http://wheyprotein.nationaldairyCouncil.org) and [nationaldairyCouncil.org](http://nationaldairyCouncil.org).





## Protein is a smart choice for your active lifestyle

Protein is an excellent workout partner, and when consumed as part of a resistance training program, it can help you meet your goal for more lean muscle.

## What happens to my muscles after I work out?

Muscle breaks down when you exercise, and aiming for 20 grams of protein after your workout helps:

- Speed the rebuilding of muscle
- Nourish your muscles
- Make the most of your workouts
- Enhance the replenishment of energy stores in the muscle from carbohydrates, to aid in faster recovery

## How much protein, paired with regular exercise, do I need to support my muscles?

Consuming approximately 20 to 30 grams of high-quality protein at each meal can help you build and maintain muscle. Each example below will provide 20 grams of protein or more:†

- Eating 2, 6-ounce containers of Greek-style yogurt
- Adding 2 ounces of your favorite cheese and a chopped egg to a salad
- Combining approximately 2 ounces of cheese and ½ cup beans (e.g., black or pinto) to a veggie burrito
- Choosing 3 to 4 ounces of lean beef, pork or poultry

## A healthy diet includes protein to help meet your needs.

Low-fat and fat-free dairy foods provide high-quality protein. Milk, flavored milk, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, Greek-style yogurt as well as foods and beverages containing whey protein can help you get the protein you need.

Regardless of the type or variety of dairy product you choose, such as milk, cheese and yogurt (e.g., regular, low-fat, fat-free, reduced-sodium, lactose-free, etc.), protein will be present.

## Fast Facts:

- Consume protein immediately before exercise or within one hour after exercise for best results.
- As little as 10 grams of protein has been shown to stimulate muscle growth following exercise. Having 8 ounces of fat-free chocolate milk or a 6-ounce container of Greek-style yogurt can help.



From learning how to pick the best **options for meatless meals** to **managing weight and controlling hunger** to learning how to maintain and **build healthy muscles and bones**, diets higher in protein can help people meet health and wellness goals.

\*Check with your doctor or registered dietitian before making changes to your diet and/or exercise routine.

\*\*Look for products containing 5 grams or more of protein per serving.

†Look for products containing 5 grams or more of protein per serving and 10% or more of the Daily Value (DV).

††Look for products containing 5 grams or more of protein and 100 mg or more of calcium per serving.

‡Look for lower fat cheese and low-fat or fat-free yogurt.