

# After Bariatric Surgery: Protein

## Why is protein important?

Protein is needed every day to build, repair, and maintain your body tissues. These tissues include your muscles, hair, skin, and nails.

After surgery, protein is important for healing and to fight off infections.

While you are losing weight after surgery, protein is important to help you to feel full when you are eating smaller portions. It also helps to reduce the amount of muscle you lose while you are losing weight and to build back muscle after you have lost weight.

## What happens if I do not eat enough protein?

If you don't eat enough protein, your body will break down its own protein stores (muscles) to meet its needs. Signs that you are not eating enough protein are:

- hair loss
- nails that are weak or grow poorly
- dry skin
- poor wound healing or infection
- loss of muscle and strength

## Can I eat too much protein?

Yes. High protein diets can lead to kidney problems. This is because the kidneys act like a filter to process the extra protein.

## How much protein do I need?

Protein needs are different for everyone, depending on age, gender, weight, and health. Ask your dietitian how much protein you need each day.

The table on the back of this handout tells you how much protein is in most foods. Foods with the most protein are from the Meat and Alternatives group and the Milk and Alternatives group. Vegetables and Fruit are low in protein but high in other nutrients. Choose higher protein foods for each meal and snack.

Some people may need a protein supplement (powder or drink) to meet their needs. **Only use a supplement if recommended by your doctor or dietitian.**

I need \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein each day.

## How much protein am I eating now?

1. Record what you eat and drink each day in your journal.

You may find it helps at first to use measuring cups/spoons or a small food scale to measure portions.

2. Write down the amount of protein for each food and drink.

To learn how much protein is in the food and drinks you choose, read the Nutrition Facts table on the package or use the table on the back of this handout.

3. Add up how much protein you had each day.

## How much protein is in food and drinks?

In the table below, the protein amount for each food is an average. To find the exact amount of protein in a food read the package label or look at nutrition information from the manufacturer or restaurant. Choose higher protein foods for each meal and snack.

Food Group	Food and Drinks	Portion	Protein (grams)
<b>Grain Products</b>	Most grain products including pasta, bread	½ cup (125 mL), 1 slice	less than 2
	Cold cereal, regular	½ cup (125 mL)	less than 3
	Hot cereal, oat bran, oatmeal or Red River®	½ cup (125 mL)	3
	Cold cereal, high protein	½ cup (125 mL)	6
	High protein cereal (Quaker Weight Control Instant Oatmeal®)	1 packet	7
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	All vegetables and fruit: raw, cooked, canned or juice	½ cup (125 mL)	less than 2
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	Cream cheese, low-fat or fat-free	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	1
	Soup made with added milk as per instructions	½ cup (125 mL)	3
	Yogurt, yogurt drinks, low-fat or fat-free	½ cup (125 mL)	3
	Yogurt, Greek style, 0% MF	½ cup (125 mL)	11
	Cheese slice, low-fat or fat-free	1 slice	4
	Pudding or custard, made with low-fat milk	½ cup (125 mL)	4
	Milk, skim, or 1% MF or soy fortified beverage	½ cup (125 mL)	5
	Cottage cheese, 1% MF or fat free	¼ cup (60 mL)	6
	Block cheese, low-fat (less than 20% M.F.)	1 oz (30 g)	7
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	Hummus	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	1
	Shrimp	1 large	1
	Beans, peas, or lentils, cooked or canned	¼ cup (60 mL)	4
	Tofu (soy), firm	1 oz (30 g)	5
	Egg	one large	6
	Fish, canned salmon or tuna	¼ cup (60 mL)	6
	Imitation crab (pollock)	¼ cup (60 mL)	6
	Tofu (soy), soft or silken	½ cup (125 mL)	6
	Meat, chicken, turkey, or fish, lean	1 oz (30 g)	7
	Ground chicken, turkey, or pork, lean	4 Tbsp (¼ cup) or 37 g	8
<b>High Fat Choices</b>	Nuts	¼ cup (60 mL)	5
	Almonds	12	3
	Peanut butter	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	4

Note: MF = Milk Fat