

# Buy This Surging Commodity Business Before Trump Does



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## In this article

Recommended

CENX FDRXX

At Tiffany's in New York, crowds flocked to see a 9-inch-tall pyramid fashioned from one of the most precious materials on Earth.

Within a few decades, millions of people would be throwing it in the trash every day.

In 1884, Colonel Thomas Casey was an Army engineer finalizing construction of the Washington Monument. He wanted this obelisk to do more than just honor America's first president... He wanted it to be a marvel to the rest of the world. He wanted to showcase his country's scientific prowess.

As construction was wrapping up in 1884,

## In This Issue

- Commodities and the Mar-a-Lago Accord
- This Metal Producer Just Turned Profitable
- The Potential of a Presidential Blessing
- One Black Friday Purchase That's Worth Making

Casey had one final decision to make...

What would go on top?

The capstone, first, needed to serve as a lightning rod. But it also had to be beautiful, enduring, and symbolic of America's strength.

The committee considered copper, bronze, even platinum. But those metals either tarnished easily or were too soft for the job.

Then Casey considered a curious metal being produced in small amounts in Philadelphia...

At the time, few people had ever laid eyes on it. This metal isn't mined. It has to be coaxed, molecule by molecule, from a stubborn clay called bauxite. The process was so complex that at the time, even a few ounces of the pure metal were considered a scientific marvel.

At about \$1 an ounce, it was as expensive as silver and rarer than gold. Napoleon III of France reportedly reserved cutlery made of this metal for his most honored guests. Everyone else ate from gold.

This metal was *aluminum*...

To explore the idea of topping the Washington Monument with aluminum, Casey contacted William Frishmuth, a chemist and metallurgist. Frishmuth had previously worked with the German scientist Friedrich Wöhler, the first person ever to isolate aluminum.

Frishmuth operated a small foundry in Philadelphia that specialized in aluminum castings. It was one of only a handful of aluminum facilities in the world.

Casey asked him to cast a single, flawless pyramid of solid aluminum – large enough

- The Old 'Rule'  
Keeping Us Weak

### Portfolio Snapshot

#### Average Open Position

Gain:

146%

to serve as the capstone for the 555-foot monument.

After multiple failed attempts, Frishmuth finally succeeded.

When the finished product arrived, it caused a sensation. Newspapers marveled at the "metallic silver" cap that would crown the monument... And New Yorkers seized the chance to see this rare precious metal on display at Tiffany's.

In a ceremony on December 6, 1884, the aluminum capstone was placed at the pinnacle of the monument. This completed the tallest structure in the world at the time.

Colonel Casey's choice of aluminum was seen as a roaring success. But today, nobody is impressed by the Washington Monument's metal cap.

Just two years after the monument's completion, a pair of scientists discovered what became known as the Hall-Héroult process. It's a way to produce aluminum at an industrial scale, and it turned the metal from novel and expensive into ubiquitous and cheap.

Today, aluminum costs about \$1.30 per pound. After adjusting for the value of 1884 dollars, that compares with roughly *\$400 per pound* when the Washington Monument was completed.

Aluminum isn't going back to \$400 per pound. But prices are on the rise...

This metal is lightweight, strong, and resistant to corrosion. These qualities make aluminum the unassuming backbone of the modern world. We use it in jet engines, soda cans, skyscrapers, window frames, electric cars, and smartphones.

And we don't have enough of it...

A multidecade shortage in aluminum is going to keep prices going up. And

## Open Position Win Rate:

35 out of 39 (89.7%)

## Top Three Buys Today:

[CENX](#), BRKR, AG

new U.S. policies will create higher profits for the few major aluminum producers left in America. It's the perfect time for us to buy the best of them.

President Donald Trump could designate this firm vital to America's national security... And if that happens, we don't have to wait for aluminum prices to tick higher. The stock could soar overnight.

## Reshoring Aluminum

By now, subscribers should be familiar with my Mar-a-Lago Accord thesis.

The main part of this is higher gold prices. Be sure to check out my [No. 1 gold stock, Seabridge Gold \(NYSE: SA\)](#), if you don't already own it... Seabridge is still a Strong Buy.

But the other part of the Mar-a-Lago Accord is rebuilding America's economic dominance from the ground up.

### It's all about reshoring.

A key goal is to drive manufacturing capability back to America.

All the changes to the value of the dollar and gold are ways to bring manufacturing back. And turning the U.S. back into a manufacturing powerhouse will require a lot of aluminum.

But right now, the U.S. produces very little of it.

The pressures of globalization have obliterated the U.S. aluminum industry – and therein lies our opportunity...

Although aluminum is the most abundant metal in the Earth's crust, making it is still an enormous industrial challenge.

To get aluminum, you must mine bauxite, refine the bauxite into alumina, and smelt the alumina into aluminum. This process demands an extraordinary amount of energy.

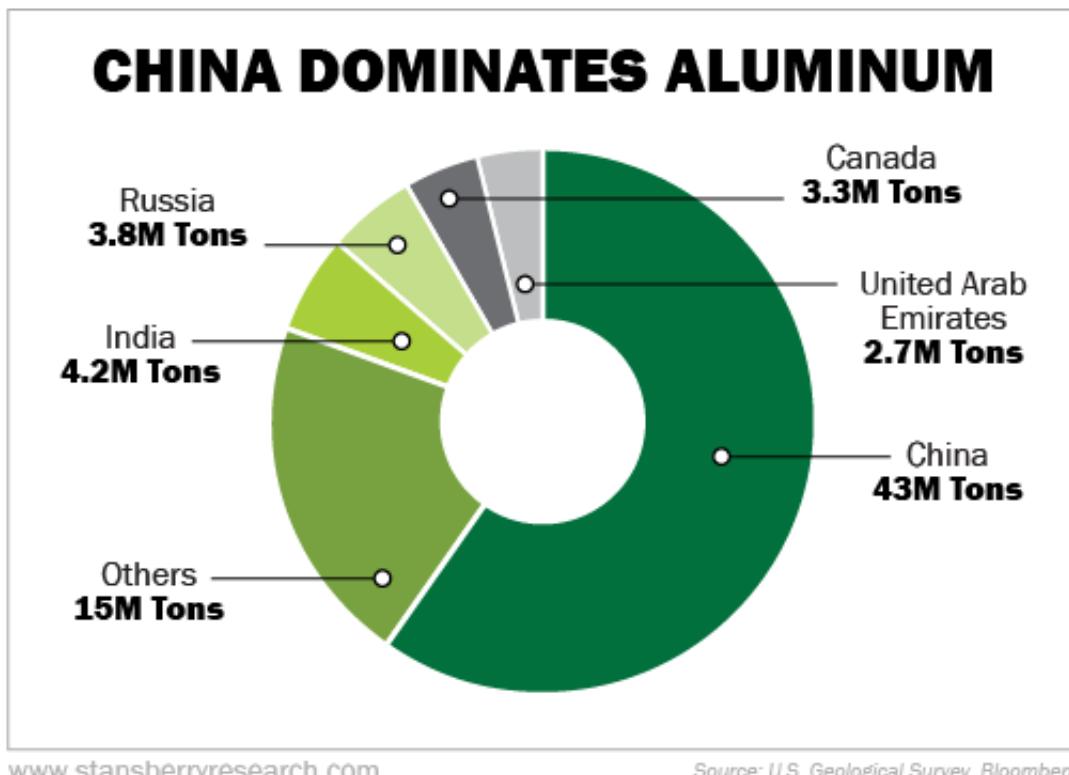
Producing a single ton of aluminum requires as much energy as multiple U.S. homes use in a year. Energy accounts for nearly 40% of total production costs.

Some even refer to aluminum as "solid electricity."

The key input to aluminum production is cheap power.

That's why the U.S. aluminum industry has migrated to places like China.

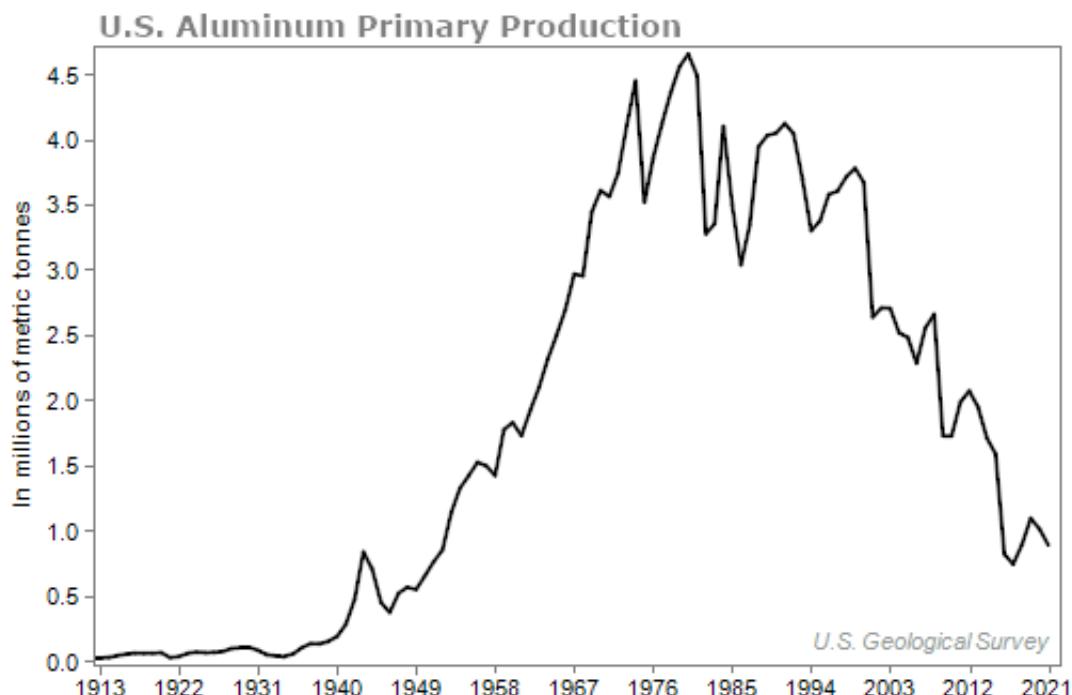
Last year, China accounted for nearly 60% of the world's aluminum output...



Over the course of a few decades, this trend has driven aluminum prices down and put American production nearly out of business.

In 2000, the U.S. was the world's leading producer of aluminum. We had 23 aluminum smelters. Today, the country only has four. And these facilities' total capacity is just 2% of the global total.

The chart below shows the steep falloff of U.S. primary aluminum production...



This is changing...

First, more demand and less supply of aluminum will drive up prices worldwide. Bank of America projects that the global surplus we have in the aluminum market this year will turn to a deficit in 2026.

Even more important, Trump's tariffs have revived U.S. aluminum production in a big way, completely changing its economics.

While many of his import duties are facing a Supreme Court challenge, aluminum falls under a clearer law called Section 232. These are tariffs put in place due to *national security*. Were a war to start, other countries could refuse to send us necessary materials.

So Trump used Section 232 to put tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Of all the Trump tariffs, these have been the simplest and least controversial.

It can vary by country, but to simplify, aluminum coming across the border gets tacked with a 10% tax.

Trump has made headlines with many much higher tariffs. Next to threats of 145% rates, 10% doesn't sound like much. But it's enough to completely flip

the equation for U.S. aluminum producers.

One particular company went from being unable to compete with foreign aluminum... to being one of the lowest-cost smelters in the world.

## The Biggest Little Aluminum Producer

**Century Aluminum (Nasdaq: CENX)** is America's largest aluminum producer.

It only has a market cap of about \$2.7 billion, showing just how small aluminum production has gotten.

Breaking down the business is fairly simple...

Century owns a mining operation in Jamaica that produces bauxite and alumina.

It uses those materials at two U.S. smelters and one in Iceland (where it has access to cheap geothermal power).

The company also owns a third U.S. smelter, but that has been inactive since 2022. We'll get to that in a moment.

All told, Century produces nearly 700,000 tons of aluminum annually. Then it sells that aluminum at market prices.

Here's where things get interesting...

The global price of aluminum is on the rise, given the world's growing industrial needs.

But the "regional premiums" are even better. Since aluminum coming into the U.S. is tariffed, prices are even higher here.

On the international London Metal Exchange, aluminum costs about \$1.30 per pound, or \$2,600 per ton. But aluminum delivered to the American Midwest costs about \$4,000 per ton – a premium of more than 50%.

That premium over the London price has surged over the past year...



As a result, Century has gone from scraping by to very profitable. And it's only going to get better.

In 2024, the company's free cash flow ("FCF") was a negative \$107 million. FCF, one of our favorite financial metrics, is the cash left over after paying all operating expenses and capital expenditures.

For 2025, the company is reversing that big loss... It's projected to finish the year with *positive* \$274 million in FCF. And Bloomberg expects \$464 million in FCF for 2026.

That's how powerful higher prices can be.

There's more ahead... Higher prices mean that Century can pursue higher production. Last year, the company won a \$500 million grant from the Department of Energy to build a new smelter... the first new smelter in the U.S. in 50 years.

It'll take around five years to get operating, so this won't benefit shareholders for a while. But it's a signal of the opportunity in aluminum.

And in the meantime, Century's newfound cash flow has cleaned up its balance sheet. The company now has less than \$500 million in long-term debt, offset by \$150 million in cash.

The bond market is also comfortable with the company's ability to repay this debt, accepting a yield of only around 6% on Century's bonds. (The company, newly turning a profit, doesn't currently pay a dividend.)

Investors have begun to catch on to this newly profitable business. Shares have been on the move, recently hitting a 52-week high...



Shares dropped yesterday on news about an investor cashing out. But even before the decline, the stock was cheap in today's richly valued market. Now,

it's even more of a steal... trading at just 13.5 times next year's earnings and 1.1 times sales.

So while shares are already up 53% this year, there's plenty of upside left.

## The Potential of a Presidential Blessing

If our story ended there, we'd already want to own Century. Shares will continue to rise as its business expands, our country reindustrializes, and the company makes more money.

But something else may happen, too...

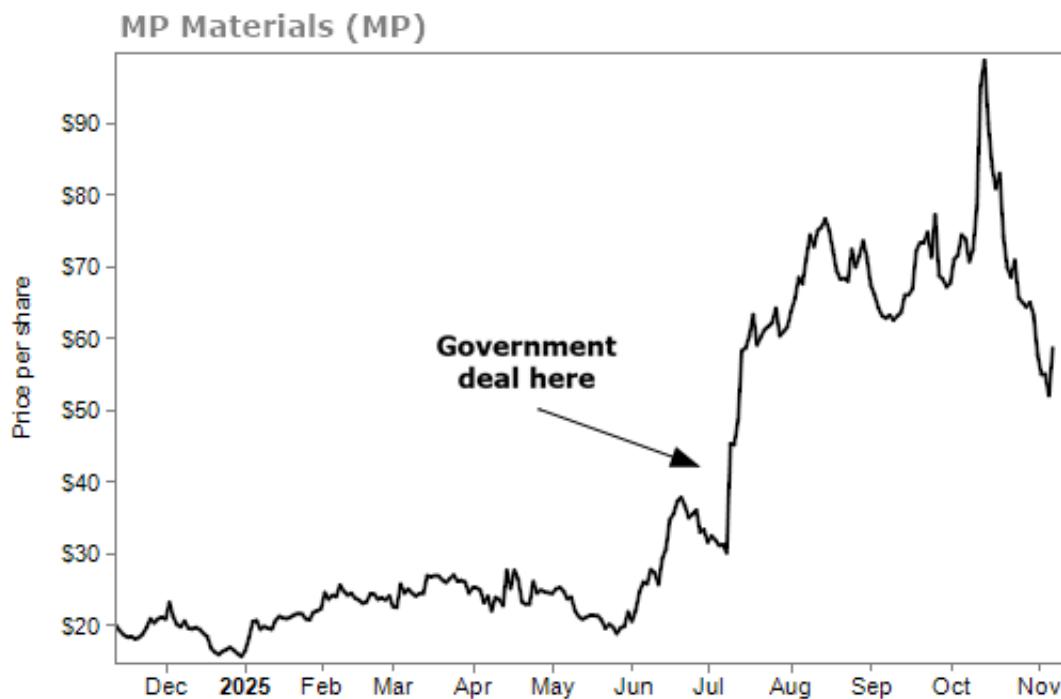
The U.S. government is picking winners.

You may like that, or you may not, but it's happening. When they do, stocks soar.

It turns out we need stuff. Important stuff. And since we get so much of our rare earths and critical minerals from foreign countries, the government is wading into private markets and making sure our home-grown businesses can produce what we need.

Back in July, the Department of Defense made a deal with MP Materials (MP) to accelerate the build-out of the country's supply chain of rare earth magnets. MP operates the only rare earths mine in the U.S.

The stock soared 50% on the news and continued to run higher in the months that followed...



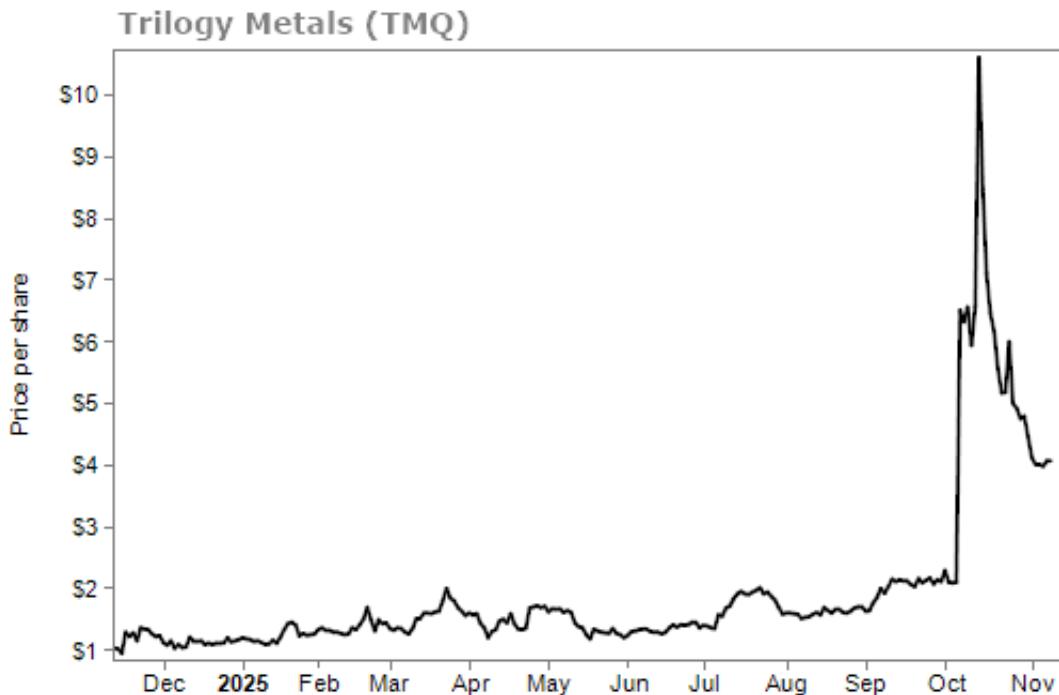
In October, the Trump administration bought a piece of Lithium Americas (LAC). It wants to help push forward one of Lithium's projects that will create the largest source of lithium in the Western Hemisphere (lithium is needed for electric-vehicle batteries, among other things).

This stock rocketed on the news, too...



Shortly after, the U.S. Department of War (the freshly introduced name for the Department of Defense) scooped up about 10% of Canadian mining company Trilogy Metals (TMQ). The government wanted to secure critical-mineral supply chains... Trilogy is involved in copper, zinc, cobalt, lead, silver, and gold.

Like MP and LAC, shares of Trilogy soared on the news...



Century could be next.

Now, let's be clear...

This is not something you can predict. We don't know that this will happen.

But all the pieces are in place for Century to get one of these sorts of deals. And similar examples show us that if it does, the stock will soar.

So here's what we see...

As of 2017, Century Aluminum was basically the only U.S. producer of *high-quality* aluminum with its Hawesville, Kentucky smelter. This is the good stuff... Century's aluminum was used in defense applications, like the manufacturing of F-18 and F-35 fighter jets.

But back in 2017, Century's CEO explained to federal officials how the industry was facing too much competition from foreign companies.

Without changes to the industry, Century couldn't keep producing aluminum. Then the U.S. would be left with no home-grown, high-quality aluminum.

But the government didn't help. So in 2022, Century shut down this high-quality smelter in Kentucky.

Now the U.S. has to import nearly all its aluminum for military aircraft and armored vehicles.

President Trump's team could consider this a national security issue.

There are signs...

Century CEO Jesse Gary has been publicly praising Trump's aluminum policy on Fox News and in press releases, trying to get the president's attention.

Plus, the biggest shareholder in Century is Glencore – a massive global commodity-trading firm.

And Glencore has invested in Century as both a buyer of its aluminum and a supplier of materials like alumina.

Now, yesterday, Glencore decided to sell nearly a quarter of its stake in Century. The companies didn't announce a reason, but we expect Glencore wanted to take profits and free up cash.

The markets hated the news. Century sold off 14% yesterday. But Glencore still owns about a third of Century, and it remains by far the biggest shareholder. Glencore is still a big believer in this company.

Century's Glencore connection is another reason that the company might get preferential treatment from Trump. You see, the president has already been helping out Glencore this year...

Following corruption charges, Glencore was placed under special monitoring.

In April, Trump ended that oversight program early.

And the deal that Century already has with the Department of Energy to build a new smelter shows that it also has government connections...

If Trump deems high-quality aluminum a national security issue, it could help work out a power deal to supply the high-quality aluminum plant in Kentucky.

It's simple... If Hawesville gets affordable power, we have military-grade aluminum again. That would allow Century to ramp up production of aluminum that sells at a premium price.

But even before those earnings hit the books, the announcement alone would send Century shares soaring.

Again, we don't need that to happen. We want to own Century anyway.

But it never hurts to position yourself to get lucky.

## How to Hold Your Cash

At *Retirement Millionaire*, we've always recommended subscribers keep a portion of their portfolios in cash.

It's an asset class that's often overlooked, but it's vital to a diversified portfolio. By cash, we mean all the money you have in savings accounts, checking accounts, certificates of deposit ("CDs"), and short-term U.S. Treasury bills... any investment with one year to maturity or less and that can't crash in value like a stock.

Since 2008, we've kept cash in our model portfolio by tracking the **Fidelity Government Cash Reserves ([FDRXX](#))**, a money-market mutual fund.

[FDRXX](#) invests primarily in very short-term, highly liquid instruments – like U.S. Treasury bills.

While we still like [FDRXX](#) to make up the cash allocation in your portfolio, there are plenty of other options where you can park your cash. For example, you can invest directly in Treasurys through [TreasuryDirect](#). (You can read our thoughts on different cash options in the [May 2024 issue](#).) So we've decided to remove FDRXX from our model portfolio.

You should still keep *at minimum* three months of expenses in cash (again, meaning any type of cash-like investment with one year to maturity or less). But we don't need to keep track of this cash in our portfolio. And we don't need to lock you into [FDRXX](#) in particular versus a high-yield savings account, Treasury bills, or any other fund.

## Shortages Mint Profits

Aluminum is crucial for U.S. industries from automotive and aerospace to electronics and national defense.

Last year, the U.S. had to import roughly *half* of all the aluminum it used... And it imported a lot more in finished products that were also built abroad. Again, this puts the country in a dangerous position.

Demand for aluminum will only grow in the future... According to a report from the nonprofit Industrious Labs, U.S. demand for aluminum is going to rise 40% by 2035.

The current setup is not going to work for much longer.

Between the tariffs and the goals of the Mar-a-Lago Accord, aluminum manufacturing is coming back home.

And the way to do that is to keep Century profitable and growing.

We may get some accelerated returns if Century can catch Trump's eye. But

even so, the market is sleeping on this industry that just switched from a multidecade decline to a new era of profits. And thanks to one Century investor's profit-taking, we can get in at a big discount versus only a few days ago.

Let's buy into this long-term uptrend... and before investors and the mainstream media catch on to the size of this story.

## ACTION TO TAKE

**Buy Century Aluminum (Nasdaq: [CENX](#)) up to \$40 per share. Please use a 50% trailing stop to protect your capital. And limit your initial purchase to 4% to 5% of your investing portfolio.**

Century is a volatile stock. That's why we're using a wider-than-usual stop price. We don't want a quick price swing to kick us out of our position. Many tailwinds are in place for U.S. aluminum production, and Century is the best way for patient investors to play that.

## **Secrets of the *Retirement Millionaire***

### **\*\*\* This Black Friday purchase is worth making...**

Longtime subscribers have heard me lose interest in Black Friday deals over the years... You can find sales on many things all year round. And most of us have too much stuff anyway.

But if you see a discount on a humidifier this month, take it...

Between winter's chill and most homes' forced-air heat, your bedroom's air is likely bone-dry. And when you sleep, your body produces less saliva and your mucus dries out more quickly – meaning it can't catch germs as well.

The results can include a scratchy throat, dry eyes, cracked lips, snoring, and a greater risk of catching a cold or the flu.

That's why I recommend running a humidifier in your bedroom. This device replenishes the air with much-needed moisture. Plus, since sweat evaporates slower in humid air than dry air, you automatically feel warmer. So you can turn down the thermostat to save on heating bills and blast less hot, dry air.

You can get a good humidifier for less than \$100, and you can probably pay even less during Black Friday deals. Look for one that is rated for your bedroom's size, easy to clean, and quiet (you don't want the noise disrupting your sleep). You can check reviews from *Consumer Reports*, the *New York Times' Wirecutter* service, and customers who've bought the device.

I also recommend a humidifier that includes a hygrometer to measure humidity in the room (or you can buy one separately). You want to keep the relative humidity between 30% and 50% to balance health benefits with preventing condensation and mold growth.

Speaking of mold... clean your humidifier regularly, or it might develop mold inside. You don't want it blasting mold spores into your bedroom. A soak in a white-vinegar-and-water mix (or cleaning according to the manufacturer's instructions) every three days typically does the trick.

### **\*\*\* A metal fork might save your sperm...**

Plastic seems pretty solid. But it sheds tiny pieces known as microplastics.

Not only are microplastics an environmental pollutant, but they're also polluting our bodies. And a growing body of evidence says they can cause inflammation as well as harm the gut, reproductive

system, immune system, metabolism, and more.

Consider this new Chinese study published in the *Journal of Nanobiotechnology*... It found that men who frequently used plastic tableware had higher levels of microplastics in their semen. What's more, researchers linked the higher levels of microplastics to poorer sperm quality.

In the study, microplastics exposure led to reduced sperm counts and more sperm-cell abnormalities in mice. And in sperm precursor cells, exposure triggered a molecular chain reaction resulting in cell damage and death.

Now, this study doesn't declare that a plastic fork is going to leave you infertile. But it's pretty intuitive that you don't want to ingest bits of your cutlery... and research continues to prove it.

So do what I do... Nix the plastic cutlery and use the real stuff whenever possible.

To further reduce your microplastic exposure, transfer restaurant leftovers from carryout containers to ceramic or glass ones. Even if a plastic container claims to be "microwave safe," don't risk it. High heat releases more microplastics.

**\*\*\* You could be sitting on an extra \$66,000...**

According to new research, Americans have nearly 32 million forgotten 401(k) retirement accounts, altogether worth \$2.1 trillion.

And the average balance in an account comes out to an eye-popping \$66,691 that's just sitting there. In most of these cases, folks switched jobs and never rolled their old 401(k)s over to their new jobs.

So don't leave free money on the table... Check whether you've got

any accounts out there, you'll want to hit up the virtual lost-and-found... There's the [National Registry of Unclaimed Retirement Benefits](#) and the [Retirement Savings Lost and Found Database](#).

Don't delay. Some employers dump these funds into low-interest accounts rather than keeping them invested in the market. [If you leave your \\$66,000 sitting there, inflation will eat away at its value...](#) giving you a less comfortable retirement once you finally track down your money.

### **\*\*\* Bounce back from the junk-food blues without pills...**

In a study published last month, researchers compared rats fed their regular food with those fed a diet high in fat and sugar. [The junk-food group showed more symptoms of depression, along with changes in levels of hormones like insulin as well as gut molecules that appear to help regulate mood.](#)

That's no surprise. We've long known that eating too much junk food can wreck your mood.

Here's where the good news comes in... Even without eating healthier, the junk-food rats could reduce their depressive symptoms and moderate their hormonal and metabolic changes. The trick? [Regular exercise.](#)

Now, I'm not saying you should live off chips and cookies. Rats that exercised *without* eating junk food got even more benefits... [like better blood-sugar regulation and increased formation of new neurons \(or nerve cells\) in the part of the brain that regulates memory and emotion.](#)

In other words, exercise *can* buffer some of the damage dealt to your mood from constantly eating junk... But exercise can't erase it. So the key is keeping the junk food to a minimum while moving your

body regularly.

New to exercise? Start small... Do what I do and take a brisk 10-minute walk right after eating. It's a simple way to keep your body and brain happier. As a bonus, this "postprandial walk" is a powerful but effective trick to steady your blood-sugar levels. Chronic spikes lead to problems like insulin resistance, diabetes, and heart disease.

**\*\*\* This holiday spice should be part of your menu all year long...**

Gingerbread houses are a Christmas tradition. But ginger has a host of health benefits (especially when it's not part of a sugary treat).

Ginger is widely known for providing powerful relief from nausea and vomiting. Gingerols and shogaols, the active compounds in ginger, also tamp down on excess inflammation and oxidative stress. And studies have shown that consuming ginger can relieve osteoarthritis pain (an inflammatory condition).

But these aren't the only benefits... According to a study published last month, ginger could also provide an extra layer of protection against dementia...

Chinese researchers compared 410 elderly dementia patients with 2,426 healthy older adults and found that people who regularly ate ginger were more often in the healthy group.

The ginger-eating group also scored higher on a cognitive test and had lower blood levels of markers – neurofilament light chain (a protein found in neurons) and amyloid-beta protein (which we know as a biomarker of Alzheimer's).

Keep in mind that some folks may find ginger aggravates their acid reflux... And folks on blood thinners need to moderate their ginger

intake. Otherwise, this spice is relatively safe.

I suggest grabbing fresh ginger from the produce section and grating it at home – the fresh stuff has more gingerol than the dried stuff you see in shaker jars. I love ginger in soups and homemade salad dressings. Similarly, you can peel and slice a teaspoon's worth of fresh ginger and steep it in hot water for about 10 minutes, then add a squeeze of lemon or drizzle of raw honey.

### **\*\*\* This luxury SUV celebrates its door slams...**

Many people pay a fortune for cars that do everything right. These cars try to make everything relaxing for the VIPs inside... and keep out all sensations from the outside world.

Others prefer paying a fortune for our *Retirement Millionaire* Car of the Month: the 2025 Mercedes-Benz G-Class.

The G-Class started life in 1979 as a military vehicle. It's like how U.S. Army Humvees morphed into the Hummer brand of luxury SUVs. Here's the G-Class that I (Brady Holt) tested recently...



[www.stansberryresearch.com](http://www.stansberryresearch.com)

This truck's heavy-duty body-on-frame construction is best suited for off-roading, not on-road serenity. Imperfection is baked into its DNA.

Here's my favorite example... Mercedes doesn't sell the G-Class with a popular luxury feature called soft-close doors – a motor that pulls shut a partially latched door. Instead, you slam the door with all your might, making a sound like you've just shattered a trash-can lid.

This was on purpose. This loud slam is "a tradition beloved for generations," Mercedes says. When the carmaker thoroughly reengineered the G-Class in 2019 (for the first time in 40 years), it hid all signs of progress. The looks didn't change, yet only three parts carried over: the spare-tire cover, the headlight washers, and the door-handle assemblies.

Behind all the rough-and-tumble character, Mercedes has quietly dialed in some decadence... like massaging seats, keyless entry, and a more comfortable driving experience.

Also, the engines are straight out of other Benzes, like my test truck's wild 577-horsepower V-8. (A base six-cylinder engine makes 443 horsepower and gets an almost reasonable 18 mpg. Or you can get an electric model... The pope has one.)

Carefully perfected flaws aren't cheap, though. The G-Class starts at \$148,250... And the one I drove cost \$219,300.

## **The Old 'Rule' Keeping Us Weak**

Ninety years ago, William Rose fed a nasty mix of cornstarch, sugar, and butterfat to a bunch of college guys.

What he found in their toilets is the basis of what we eat today.

Rose was a biochemist and nutritionist at the University of Illinois. And he wanted to figure out how much protein our bodies need.

His outrageous concoction was free of protein. During experiments in the

1930s, he would tinker with the formula to add one amino acid at a time. (Amino acids are the building blocks of protein.)

All amino acids have nitrogen. It's in the protein we eat... but not in carbohydrates or fat. So Rose used a technique called nitrogen balance to track our protein needs.

He measured how much nitrogen was in the substance he fed his test subjects. Then he measured how much was in their bodily waste. If the input and output matched, it meant the body was getting just enough nitrogen... and, therefore, enough protein.

Based on these studies, Rose decided that by eating about 0.45 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight, most people would get enough protein to meet their bodies' needs. To be safe, he then nearly doubled that figure to 0.8 grams.

That comes to 65 grams (2.3 ounces) of protein per day for a 180-pound adult. That's the amount you'd find in a large cooked chicken breast.

In 1941, the U.S. government used Rose's finding to create America's first recommended dietary allowance ("RDA") of protein. And we're still using it today.

I have a lot of problems with this...

First, Rose's subjects were young healthy white male college students. Their protein needs don't represent the average adult's.

Second, he only measured each test subject for a few days. So he could only see how much protein was enough for the short term.

Next, the theory of "nitrogen balance" assumes that all the nitrogen you eat will either be used by your body or turned into pee or poop. It's not so simple. People also lose nitrogen through breathing, sweating, and other activities.

Finally, that 0.8 number isn't the result of an intense scientific process. Rose

took a protein figure he developed during his research, then decided that folks should eat... oh, about twice that much.

(As a note... we've read a few different accounts of Rose's research process. In particular, some sources say he relied more heavily on rats than human test subjects. If true, that hardly resolves our concerns.)

The RDA aspect is misleading, too. We're used to hearing the *maximum* amount of something we're supposed to eat in a day. But Rose intended 0.8 grams per kilogram to be a *minimum* before you face protein deficiency and muscle loss.

Put it all together, and **at least a third of U.S. adults aged 50 and over aren't getting enough protein.**

You might hear a lot of noise about protein. Companies are putting it in everything from shakes to bars, chips, cereal, and water.

Today, I'm going to explain what protein does for your body... how much of it you need... and my top tips for getting enough protein – without throwing away your money on "protein" products.

## **The Fuel for Your Muscles – And More**

You probably know that moving regularly is essential for healthy aging, including building muscle.

But protein deficiency will undo all that hard work you put into being active. Protein is the fuel for your muscles... Without protein, your body can't build up and repair muscle tissue.

Many of us settling into retirement might assume that we're past the "pump iron and build big muscles" era in our lives... We might focus on other things instead of protein.

Besides, as we age, slowing down becomes the norm... where the metabolism slows, appetite wanes, and we might assume our protein needs

follow suit.

But that misconception couldn't be further from the truth. Thinking this way can end up quietly accelerating muscle loss, reduced strength, and frailty.

You see, muscle maintenance becomes more important than ever as we age. By pushing back against your body's weakening, you could make the difference between independence and depending on others for your basic needs.

Exercise is a big part of the equation... But the other half of the equation means changing the way you think about protein. As you age, protein is more essential to your health than ever.

Starting at age 30, folks often begin losing up to 5% of their muscle mass per decade. Once you reach your 70s and 80s, it's possible to have lost a third of your total muscle mass.

The bottom line is that if you want to stay independent and energetic to enjoy your retirement years, you need to maintain your muscles. Exercise is crucial for building muscle. And for the muscle itself, you need protein.

In addition to muscle mass, protein is also critical to our immune systems.

From dietary protein, amino acids like arginine, cysteine, and glutamine, for example, are key players in your ability to ramp up the number of immune cells, form antibodies, and even provide antioxidant defense. So inadequate protein intake puts you at risk of infections, makes recovery slower, and worsens vaccine response.

Finally, these amino acids in protein are the building blocks for your central nervous system's neurotransmitters. They regulate everything from your mood to your heart rate.

Even as our aging bodies need protein, it becomes harder for us to absorb it. That's because as you age – especially if you've been inactive for a long time

– your muscle protein synthesis ("MPS") declines.

MPS is the process of converting dietary protein into muscle when you eat high-quality protein and exercise your muscles.

Researchers have found that older men get 16% less MPS than younger men who've eaten the same foods. And to maximize MPS, older adults may need almost double the protein per meal (0.4 grams per kilogram of body weight) versus younger adults (0.24 grams per kilogram).

Finally, old age brings other barriers that can also cut our protein intake. They include:

- Appetite loss
- Trouble swallowing
- Oral health problems (like missing teeth and less saliva production)
- Gastrointestinal changes (like reduced stomach acid production and trouble moving food through your digestive system, or motility)
- The cost of protein-rich foods

Now, I already explained the problems with the official RDA for protein. Here's how much you should really get...

## The Numbers You Want to Aim For

Numerous studies agree that for older adults, eating the RDA for protein simply isn't enough...

Their numbers vary a bit. But based on them and major consensus reports – including 21st-century research from the Gerontological Society of America, the European Geriatric Medicine Society, and recent papers in *Nutrients* and the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, here's the recommendation I'm

going to share...

**Most healthy older adults should be eating 1.2 to 1.5 grams of protein per day for every kilogram of body mass.** For that 180-pound senior, this is about 100 to 120 grams of protein per day.

*That's at least 50% more protein than Dr. Rose's RDA from 1941.*

This is the protein your body needs by the time you're 65. And by the time you hit 50, you should already be building toward that protein goal.

Even at younger ages, the official minimum RDA of 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight often isn't enough to meet most folks' basic needs. Depending on your activity levels, I recommend 1 to 1.5 grams per kilogram per day.

And based on the research I cited earlier... if you're recovering from severe illness or malnutrition, you should be getting 2 grams per kilogram per day.

Most folks don't have to worry about getting too much protein, as long as they're getting it from whole foods instead of supplements. But protein can be taxing on your kidneys, so older folks with kidney issues might be cautioned by their doctors to limit protein intake.

When your body has more protein than it needs, the surplus gets chemically separated from its amino groups, which creates toxic ammonia. Your liver changes this ammonia into urea, and it comes out in your urine... so folks on extremely high-protein diets end up peeing more and even becoming dehydrated.

Also, since protein is also very filling, folks focused on protein might eat less fiber, which is also very filling. That can lead to gastrointestinal issues like constipation, diarrhea, and nausea. And excessive animal-based protein – which has more saturated fat than other protein varieties – is linked to cardiovascular disease.

Here's how to strike this balance...

## Doc's Practical Protein Tips for Healthy Aging

By following these three recommendations, you'll get the protein you need without causing harm elsewhere...

**1. Eat real food first.** That means fatty fish, dairy, legumes, poultry, and lean meats... You need protein-rich, whole foods, not expensive tubs of protein powder or fancy protein shakes. The food I recommend provides the full range of amino acids your body needs, along with other micronutrients – like zinc, iron, B vitamins, and calcium – that your muscles and metabolism rely on.

And unless your doctor recommends supplementing, there's another reason to skip the tubs of protein powder emblazoned with promises of "clean" or "all natural" protein...

Recent independent lab tests by *Consumer Reports* have found that many protein powders – especially plant-based ones – contained lead, arsenic, cadmium, and other heavy metals flagged as likely to cause cancer, sometimes above recommended safety limits.

**2. Divide and conquer.** Don't load up on protein for just one meal. Keep your body producing muscles throughout the day, and keep your metabolism humming. Research has found that compared with younger folks, older adults need a higher dose of protein per meal – about 0.4 grams per kilogram of body weight – to most effectively trigger muscle synthesis.

Now, you don't have to make every mealtime an exercise in mathematics by weighing your food and consulting dietary tables...

Rather, just get a general sense of how much protein your usual foods provide and focus on consistency – like being in a ballpark range of protein per meal.

Here are some guideposts...

- A palm-sized piece of fish or chicken has roughly 25 to 30 grams of protein
- An egg has about 6 grams of protein
- A single-serving container of nonfat Greek yogurt has about 10 grams of protein
- A half cup of canned black beans has about 9 grams of protein
- A handful of almonds has about 6 grams of protein

**3. Variety is key.** Animal protein is more digestible than its plant counterparts and has more leucine, an amino acid linked to improved muscle synthesis. But as we noted, you can't eat only animal protein without elevating your risk of heart disease.

Not to mention, we're learning that leucine also helps activate immune cells called macrophages that are important for inflammation. Macrophages in the heart help folks with cardiovascular disease... They remove damaged cells (including clogging deposits) from the walls of blood vessels, and they regulate inflammation for repair.

On the flip side, *too many* heart-macrophage players can increase inflammation or give way to abnormal macrophages that can end up hurting your heart cells. A 2024 Nature Metabolism study found that too much leucine from too much protein raises your cardiovascular risk.

So skip the supplement aisle, limit your meat intake, and make up the difference with a variety of plant and dairy proteins.

One large study showed just how protective plant protein can be...

Published in 2024, the study involved 3,721 healthy middle-aged female nurses from the Nurses' Health Study whose eating habits were followed for roughly 30 years.

The study found that all three kinds of protein – animal, dairy, and plant – had benefits and drawbacks. For instance, it linked eating lots of meat to having good physical function but a higher risk of developing chronic diseases.

However, women eating more plant protein were 46% likelier to end up being healthy in their later years (defined by being free of 11 chronic diseases, memory problems and other mental-health issues, and physical problems), versus a 6% lower likelihood among women who ate lots of animal protein.

## **Put That Protein to Use**

To maintain your independence and energy in your later years, you need to maintain your muscles. And to do that, you'll need protein, the substrate for those muscles.

Now, you mustn't forget exercise – namely, resistance exercise. I always recommend keeping your body moving, which is also important, but taking a walk doesn't build muscle like lifting a weight.

Remember the top reason I'm so concerned about older adults getting inadequate protein: the need to offset muscle loss as you age. You need protein to build and repair muscle, but it also takes exercise to trigger that vital muscle synthesis.

You can [click here](#) to read more about resistance training that I recommend.

Also be sure to get enough sleep. Your brain churns out growth hormones while you sleep, and that's what helps build the muscle you've cultivated with protein intake and exercise.

Finally, stay hydrated. Extra dietary protein means extra work for your kidneys. Make sure the protein you're getting is helping you and not hurting

you.

Here's to our health, wealth, and a great retirement,

Dr. David Eifrig

With Matt Weinschenk, Jeff Havenstein, Ellen Chung, and the *Retirement Millionaire* Team

November 12, 2025

