

Plant Protein for Your Heart Health

Some one asked me about getting enough protein from plant source. Here it is - Protein is one of the 3 macronutrients that are needed in large amounts (others are fats and carbohydrates). Protein requirements are based on age, body size, activity levels and overall health. Dietitians often encourage people to cut back on carbs and eat less fat.

When it comes to protein, advice about the ideal daily amount has been mixed. Americans on an average consume one plant protein source for every three animal protein source.-ratio of 1 to 3. A study published in 2024 showed that changing the ratio to one plant protein source for every 2 animal protein source lowered the risk of stroke by 19%.

A ratio closer to 1 to 1 lower the risk of coronary artery disease by 27%.

The US government recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of 0.8 g of protein per kilogram body weight. Many experts recommend even higher amounts-between 1.2 and 2 grams of protein for kilogram body weight. That means for a healthy 150 pound person, eating between 80 and 136 g of protein each day

AMINO ACIDS; Proteins are composed of hundreds of Amino acids which help our bodies functions in many ways. While animal protein sources contain all amino acids, plant based protein sources do not. You have to eat variety of plant based protein sources to get all the amino acids. Getting adequate protein from plant based foods can be a challenge.

3 ounce of chicken breast contains 20 to 25 gr of protein while a half a cup of cooked beans has only 8 to 10 grams. Thus eyeballing equivalent serving sizes won't work. You need to know the amount of protein in a portion size in order to achieve your protein goal.

PROTEIN REQUIREMENT FOR WOMEN: Women may need more protein for certain reasons which include pregnancy and breast-feeding. Research also shows that women are more prone to insulin resistance as they age-when cells in their muscles, fat and liver aren't as sensitive to insulin's blood sugar- regulating effects.

As a result, older women should increase protein and fat intake and fewer carbohydrates. For both men and women, aging alone, increases protein needs, as we become more vulnerable to diminishing muscle mass and bone thinning osteoporosis, which strikes four times more older women than men.

Age related muscle loss, called Sarcopenia is a natural part of aging. After age 30, men begin to lose as much as 3% to 5% of their muscle mass per decade and most will lose about 30% during their lifetime. Strength training and protein are the two ways to build muscle mass and combat sarcopenia

Here are some examples of how much protein you can get from typical serving of high-quality protein sources : Black beans -half cup-7 g Nuts -1/4 cup-7 grams Quinoa -one cup-8 g Lentils -1/2 cup-9 g Baked tofu -3 ounces-13 g Tempeh-3 ounces-18 g Egg -1 large-6 g Cheddar cheese-1 ounce-7 g 2% milk -1 cup-8 g Greek yogurt -6 ounces-17 g Salmon-3 ounces-19 g Chicken/turkey breast-3 ounces-25 g Another option is whey protein powder or vegan powders made from soy, peas or brown rice are a useful choice if you have trouble getting enough protein from foods.

They can be added to oatmeal or smoothies or stirred into a glass of water. Because powders come with measuring scoops, they can help you track how many grams of protein you are consuming.

WATCH YOUR WEIGHT: While attempting to meet your daily plant protein intake, be sure to watch your calorie intake. All foods have calories. Nuts are high in protein, but also high in calories, so is cheese. Peanut butter is a great source of protein, but often contain unhealthy oils and sugar.

While it is OK to boost your daily protein intake with a smoothie, make sure the protein powder you use does not contain sugar or unhealthy, artificial sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

Timing of your protein : Research suggests that body can make use of only 20 to 40 g of dietary protein at one time. So there is no benefit from getting most of your daily protein from one meal. Instead, try to evenly distribute your protein over breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.

Also, to maximize muscle growth and improve recovery, consume a portion of your daily protein within 30 mts to 1 hour after your strength training workout, through either a drink or a meal.

Keshava Aithal

Dr Keshava Aithal

ಐಒಃ 8 Double o