



## 6 Ways to Sneak More Sources of Protein Into Your Day

*Whether you're short on sources of protein or simply looking for ways to get more, here are tried-and-true solutions for sneaking it in during your day.*



Written by Jenn Sinrich  
September 21, 2021

Most of us know that sources of protein are important, and get our fair share of [protein](#) from our diet alone, namely from lean meats like beef and lamb, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy products. But some subgroups, especially those with dietary preferences, fall in a category that makes them especially susceptible to a protein deficiency, including vegetarians, vegans and picky eaters, both children and adults alike. Even if you don't fall into one of these categories, it's not uncommon to have trouble fitting in quality sources of protein in your diet.

"In the world of dietitians, we count something as a protein source if it provides about 7 grams of protein per serving, which means if you are having peanut butter, you need to have the equivalent of 2 tablespoons to be recognized as an actual source of protein," explains Laura Cipullo, R.D., registered dietitian, yoga instructor and founder of [Laura Cipullo Whole Nutrition and Yoga](#). "If not, the nut butter will likely count as a source of fat only."

Protein plays a vital role in our health and is one of three macronutrients, along with carbohydrates and fats, that we need to keep our bodies working at optimal levels. All macronutrients provide nutritional value, but Cipullo explains that protein is especially helpful. "Protein slows down the absorption of dietary carbohydrates and helps prevent reactive hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) or hyperglycemia (high blood sugar)," she says. "When you combine protein and carbohydrate at a meal or snack, the body receives the meal as a glycemic load that is then slowly digested and absorbed affecting blood sugar levels more positively." She describes this load as similar to an extended-release medication: It's broken down in the body and released over a long period of time so that you stay full and satisfied longer. "This helps to prevent insulin resistance, diabetes and constantly feeling hungry and is also vital for those on the run to feel steadily energized throughout the day," she adds.

Whether you're short on [sources of protein](#) or simply looking for ways to get more, here are tried-and-true solutions for sneaking it in during your day.

## Know your sources

One of the most important tips for sneaking sources of protein into your diet is to make sure you know which sources of food contain protein, notes Maria Sorbara Mora, R.D., founder of [Integrated Eating](#). While meat is most certainly a great source of protein, it is hardly the only source. “Animal sources contain all the essential amino acids a body needs, as well as heme iron which is most absorbable to the body, but there are many other sources of protein,” she says. “When you consider these other sources: yogurt, cheese, hummus, beans, nuts, edamame, tofu, etc., your options open!”

## Have these protein sources readily available

Simply knowing which foods are sources of protein is only part of the solution—you also have to make sure you have them handy so that you can fill up on them. “Slow down at the dairy aisle and load your cart with yogurt, cottage cheese, ricotta, milk, eggs and hard cheeses, as they are all great sources of protein and compatible additions for breakfast,” says Mora. “Sliced deli meats, prepared tuna or chicken salad save the day for the busiest of people for lunch and quick animal and plant sources of protein are great for dinner: frozen turkey meatballs, chicken sausage, veggie burgers and canned beans.”

## Meal prep

Meal prepping is a great way to make sure that you’re getting a healthy, well-balanced meal and not reaching for something that’s convenient, but lacking in nutrients. For a protein-rich source, Mora recommends [boiling eggs](#) and keeping them in the fridge so you can grab them on the go. “Eggs are the most bioavailable foods on the planet, which means all the amino acids are 100 percent absorbable in your body,” she says. “Slice a few on toast with avocado, add to your salads or eat on their own for a snack!”

She also recommends making extras for dinner so you can have them as leftovers for lunch. “Make a whole batch of chicken cutlets on Monday night and then you’ll instantly have the makings for a sandwich or can top with a salad the rest of the week,” she says.

## Know how to order out

You can really sneak some protein into any meal if you know how to order. Mora recommends adding chicken, turkey sausage or bacon to your breakfast waffle or pancake order and topping salads with beans, chickpeas, nuts, cheese, eggs and meats/fish like chicken, shrimp, tuna or salmon. “At a convenience store, find protein bars over granola bars and trail mix over chips to create a high protein snack,” she adds.

## Keep nuts handy

One of the best non-meat sources of protein are nuts, specifically almonds, walnuts, pistachios and cashews. Not only are they great protein sources, but they’re also so easy to pack with you when you’re on the go since they’re small in size and don’t require any refrigeration. [Nicole M. Avena](#), Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Neuroscience at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Visiting Professor of Health Psychology at Princeton University and author of [What to Eat When You Want to Get Pregnant](#) recommends adding nuts such as walnuts or almonds as a topping for yogurt or salads.

## Swap rice for quinoa

Rice and pasta might taste delicious, but neither are good sources of protein. The good news is that many manufacturers are making rice and pasta out of quinoa—a protein-packed whole grain. “Quinoa is considered a ‘complete protein’ because it contains all the essential amino acids and has 8 grams of protein per cup,” she says. She recommends supplementing quinoa for rice or pasta when making salad in order to incorporate more protein and amino acids in your diet.