

SENIOR NUTRITION NEWS

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Power Up with Protein

Protein is a very important nutrient. Without enough protein older adults can see a loss in muscle mass which can lead to more difficulty with activities of daily living and an increased risk of falls, which in time could eventually affect their ability to live independently.



How much protein is needed?

Many older adults have a difficult time getting enough protein. As we age our bodies tend to need more protein. General recommendations from MyPlate suggest for ages 60+, women consume 5 to 6 ounce equivalents and men 6 to 7 ounce equivalents of protein rich foods per day.

Research shows that older adults who eat protein with every meal have lower risks for protein deficiency and muscle wasting. For those reasons, older adults should try to eat 20–30 grams of protein at every meal.

How much protein is in different foods?

The nutrition facts label on food packages can tell you how many grams of protein are in different foods. A 3 ounce portion of meat, poultry, or fish is about the size and thickness of the palm of your hand or a deck of cards.

- Lean meat, skinless poultry, fish or shellfish (1 oz = 7 grams of protein)
- Eggs (1 egg = 6 grams of protein)
- Milk (1 cup or 8 oz = 8 grams of protein)
- Yogurt (1 cup or 8 oz = 8.5 grams of protein)
- Cheese (is a good source of protein, but can vary a little so check the food label)
- Cottage cheese (1/2 cup = 14 grams)
- Nuts & seeds (1/4 cup or 1 oz = 3 to 7 grams of protein)
- Legumes (such as beans, peas, & lentils) (1/2 cup cooked = 7 grams of protein)

Some ideas for protein rich snacks include:

- Apples or banana with peanut or almond butter
- Whole grain crackers with cheese
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fruit or salsa
- Homemade trail mix with nuts, seeds, and dried fruit
- Smoothie made with low-fat yogurt, nut butter, and fruit



Sweet Potato and Black Bean Quesadillas

4 whole wheat tortillas
1/3 cup chopped cilantro
shredded sharp cheddar cheese
cooking spray

2 medium-sized sweet potatoes
1 can low-sodium black beans
1 teaspoon cumin



Prepare Ingredients:

Wash then cube sweet potatoes in 1-inch squares.
Microwave the sweet potatoes for 6-7 minutes (until soft).

Drain, rinse, and dry the black beans.

Mash the potatoes and combine with other ingredients:

Mash the sweet potatoes inside a large bowl with a fork.
Add black beans, cilantro, and cumin to the sweet potatoes.
Stir until well combined.

Assemble the quesadillas.

Spread a generous amount of the mixture on half of each tortilla.
Sprinkle cheese on top of the mixture and fold the tortilla in half.

Cook on medium high heat.

Cook quesadillas until golden brown.
Flip and cook on the other side.
Serve immediately.

Serves 4

Sources: <https://extension.usu.edu/nutrition/research/Seniors-and-protein>; How much protein do you need every day? - Harvard Health; <https://extension.usu.edu/covid-19/recipes>; www.myplate.gov retrieved 02/23/24

For Information on Eat Smart Idaho classes, contact the Nutrition Instructor in your county:

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