

Protein Intake Strategies for Men

You started an exercise program with the intent to lose fat, get lean, and build muscle. Strength training is going to play a huge role in building the physique you are trying to achieve, but getting your nutrition right is going to be just as important, if not more important.

You may have already cleaned up your diet and have been making healthier choices, but have you made the best choices for your goals?

Men often forget one crucial aspect of nutrition for fat loss and physique transformation. Eating enough protein. This simple mistake can make the difference between looking nearly the same over the next few months or completely altering your body composition within weeks.

What is protein?

Many times we ask new clients what their primary source of protein was in the breakfast they ate this morning. They will often respond with an answer like “I had oatmeal and a tablespoon of peanut butter”. This isn’t a bad combination of healthy foods, but there is no real source of protein. Oatmeal is carbohydrate source, and peanut butter is primarily a fat. There is a small amount of protein in each, but eating like this will make meeting your daily protein requirements nearly impossible.

Protein is the building blocks of our body. It’s the first source your body turns to for fuel when in a calorie deficit. It’s also the most satiating of the 3 macronutrients (protein, fat, and carbohydrate), making you fuller faster and longer.

The following table shows some of the best sources of protein you can add to your diet:

Animal Based	Plant Based	Supplements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Turkey • Lean Beef • Pork • Fish • Eggs • Dairy (Greek Yogurt, Milk, cottage cheese etc..) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tofu • Tempeh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whey Powder • Casein Powder • Soy Powder • Hemp Powder • Gemma Powder • Protein Bars

How Much Protein Do You Need?

It’s important to get the optimal amount of protein on a daily basis, especially when strength training and eating low calorie. A high protein diet is not only healthy, but assists the recovery process after strenuous exercise, keeps you satiated between meals, builds muscle, and helps you lose fat faster.

A good goal is to get anywhere from .7 to 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight. If you weigh 200 pounds you should be eating at least 140-200 grams of protein daily.

How Should You Structure Your Meals?

You can structure your day however you want as long as you follow one simple rule. Every meal should be based around protein. Choose a protein listed on the previous table then build the rest of the meal around it. If you want a low carb meal add green vegetables or a salad. If you want a more balanced meal add some green vegetables and a

serving of starch or fruit. (potatoes, bread, berries, apples, etc..) Here are some examples of how you can organize these meals:

Breakfast

Meal Examples	Protein (grams)
2 Eggs, 2 pieces of turkey bacon, 1 scoop of whey protein in water	43 g
1 Cup of egg whites, ½ cup of oatmeal, 10 almonds	32 g
2 scoops of whey protein in almond milk blended with 1 cup of frozen strawberries and 1 tbsp of natural peanut butter	50 g

Lunch

Meal Examples	Protein (grams)
5 ounces of chicken breast, 2 cups of spinach, balsamic vinniagrette	31 g
5 ounces of sliced turkey deli meat on whole grain bread	30 g

Dinner

Meal Examples	Protein (grams)
5 ounces of baked salmon, 1 cup mixed vegetables	34 g
5 ounces of 96/4 extra lean ground beef, 1 medium sweet potato	32 g

Protein Supplements

Following the meal ideas above should bring you close to your goal protein intake for the day. If you are still having a hard time reaching your goal protein intake the most convenient option to get you there is a protein supplement.

These come in the form of protein powders that you add to liquid or in the form of a protein bar.

Protein powders are always going to be your best option because they are almost entirely protein. Protein bars can be a great option if you pay attention to the nutrition label. Many bars are essentially glorified candy bars. Make sure the bar has at least 15 grams of protein and isn't loaded with fat and sugar (or sugar alcohols).

Protein Snacks

If you don't enjoy protein supplements the next best option is having a protein filled snack between meals. Some great options include beef jerky, greek yogurt, cottage cheese, and hard boiled eggs.

Portioning Your Protein

Most people don't want to measure their food with a scale or measuring cups, but it's going to be important to have some strategies you can use when deciding the portion size of your protein. If you are eating meat or fish a 4 ounce portion is roughly the same size as the palm of your hand or a deck of cards. Use the following table as a quick guide to make sure you are meeting your protein intake for each meal.

Food	Protein (grams)
4 oz. Chicken (baked)	25 g
4 oz. Beef 96/4 extra lean (cooked)	24 g
4 oz. Pork Tenderloin (baked)	23 g
4 oz. Salmon	22 g
1 Can of White Tuna	40 g
1 Egg	6 g

You cannot out train a bad diet. Just because you are eating "healthy" foods doesn't mean your nutrition is good or right for your goals. The lean muscular physique you are shooting for can only be achieved by hard work in the gym AND the kitchen. Following the tips in this guide will set you up for long term success with your fat loss and muscle building goals.