

The #1 Nutrition Tip For Long Term Success

Always Start With Protein



Disclaimer

Nutrition is a very complex field. Even with all the PhD's in the world, humans have barely scratched the surface on food and it's effects on humans.

With that said, everything we cover is what have worked best for my clients. Consult a registered dietitian, nutritionist, or your doctor before following any of the advice laid out ahead.

Always Start With Protein

No matter your goals, the first nutrient that deserves the most attention is protein.

Why Is Protein Important?

Most people think protein is just for building muscle. They think of massive bodybuilders who down buckets full of protein shakes to “get huge.”

Luckily, that stereotype is fading as more average people are seeing great results after upping their protein.

However, there’s still a lot of misunderstanding about protein, so let’s break that down before we determine how much of it you need every day.

There are 2 main reasons why you need to start with protein: muscle maintenance and satiety.

Muscle Maintenance:

It’s important to know that the goal of any workout is NOT to burn calories. It’s to maintain as much muscle as possible so when you lose weight, it all comes from body fat. Also, the more muscle you keep, the more definition your body keeps AND the stronger your metabolism stays.

Because of this, you actually need MORE protein when losing weight versus gaining weight.

Satiety:

While the first point was a physical reason, this next point is more mental.

Protein is a very satisfying nutrient, meaning you don't need a lot to feel full.

To be clear, that doesn't make carbs bad. It just means you're less likely to be satisfied from a carb-heavy meal than a protein-heavy meal.

Hunger and cravings are what kill long-term success. Everyone has the willpower to deal with hunger for a few weeks, but after that, it starts to really disrupt your normal life. Your performance at work starts to suffer, and you likely end up quitting the diet.

Protein helps prevent that by keeping you full without having to eat tons of calories. Fat does a similar thing, but it's much more calorie dense, so it's a bit counter intuitive.

How Much Protein Do I Need?

You need at least 1g of protein per pound you weight.

So if you weight 150lbs, you need 150g of protein.

We won't get into the science of why. That'll get confusing very quickly. Just know that it works phenomenally for everyone, especially for losing weight.

Here are a couple of important points:

- Hit this target even if you're not exercising. The idea that "having protein on a rest day will make you gain fat" is a myth.

- If you weigh more than 200lbs, you can limit your protein to 200g a day. This is common in people who have a lot of body fat to lose, and they can get away with having less than 1g protein per pound.

Hitting Your Daily Protein Target

Choosing Protein Sources

You know your protein target, now you have to hit it.

It's easiest to think of "protein sources" as 3 different categories:

- Animal Based
- Tofu/Seitan
- Supplements

What About Other Plant-Based Protein Sources?

Yes, there are many other foods that have protein, but they're not dense enough to be a reliable source.

For example, a lot of people say broccoli is a "high protein" vegetable. That's technically true when you compare protein content to calories. However, if you compare protein to the actual amount you have to eat, it's completely unrealistic.

To get 25g of protein from chicken breast, you only have to eat about 4oz (the size of one fist). How much broccoli do you need for 25g of protein? About 10 cups. So which would you rather eat every meal? A 4oz chicken breast? Or 10 cups of Broccoli?

And that's just to get 25g. Imagine how much broccoli it takes to hit 150g.

Meal Frequency And Protein

Let's first dispel a common fitness myth.

Eating more often does not speed up your metabolism. There is no direct relationship between meal frequency and metabolic speed.

However, eating more will make your protein goal much easier.

For example, if your goal is 150g protein, and you only eat twice a day, here's what that might look like:

- **Meal 1:** 75g Protein
- **Meal 2:** 75g Protein

In other words:

- **Meal 1:** About 12oz chicken breast
- **Meal 2:** About 12oz chicken breast

So if you're only eating twice, you have to eat a TON of protein during each meal, which is very hard.

But imagine if you ate three times a day? It would instead look like this:

- **Meal 1:** 50g protein
- **Meal 2:** 50g protein
- **Meal 3:** 50g protein

In other words:

- **Meal 1:** 8oz chicken breast
- **Meal 2:** 8oz salmon

- **Meal 3:** 8oz lean beef

8oz is a lot more realistic than 12oz right? But wait, we can make it even easier:

- **Meal 1:** 2 scoops of protein powder (50g protein)
- **Meal 2:** 6oz chicken breast (35g protein)
- **Meal 3:** 6oz salmon (35g protein)
- **Meal 4:** 6oz lean beef (35g protein)

So by taking a protein shake in the morning (or whenever it's most convenient), you can greatly reduce how much protein you need for the rest of the day.

For that reason alone, **meal frequency is very important**. The more often you eat, even if it's just a protein shake, the easier it is to hit your protein target.

Just be careful with everything you're eating WITH the protein. If you decide to eat more often, you have to reduce your side dishes to keep calories under control.

Knowing Versus Thinking That You're Hitting Your Target

It's very important that you *know* you're hitting your target. You should never just *think* that you are.

How do you know for sure? You'd have to measure your protein sources for each meal. Very simple, but it takes some discipline.

If you're not putting your protein source on a food scale or in measuring cups, you're not actually hitting your target. This is called eyeballing, and even people with decades of experience are terrible at eyeballing.

The context doesn't matter. For example, if you're eating food from work, and you choose the chicken sandwich, you can't just "think" it has 6oz of chicken. You have to **know** it does. And the only way to know is either looking at the nutrition label or weighing it yourself. Of course, this is a ton of time and work before eating that sandwich, so to make it easier, just prepare all of your food yourself.

If you're consistently eating food that didn't come from your own kitchen, your journey is going to be much harder.

The obvious example is fast food, but this applies everywhere.

Again, the best way to know for sure is to make it yourself. If you're struggling to bring food to work because of time, just bring a protein supplement. There's no reason not to have a supplement replace meals you'd normally order out.

Practice Takes Patience

Weighing and measuring food like this takes practice and patience.

It will be annoying and frustrating at first, but once you get use to it, it'll be automatic. Not only that, you'll gain so much control over your fitness journey that you're almost guaranteeing your results in the end. The only way to completely guarantee it is by tracking all of your calories, not just protein.

But protein is a great start.