

Keep Your Muscle

A plain-English guide to protein, easy meals and a 10-minute strength routine while you lose weight.

Before you start: Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider before changing your diet or starting exercise, and ask how much protein is right for you, especially if you have kidney disease, take any prescription, are pregnant or nursing, or have a medical condition. This guide is general education, not medical advice. *These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

1. Why muscle matters when you lose weight

When people lose weight, part of what they lose can be muscle, not just fat. Muscle helps you climb stairs, carry groceries and stay steady on your feet, and we naturally lose some as we age. Two habits help you keep it: **eating enough protein** and **doing some strength exercise**.

2. How much protein? What the research says

Protein targets are usually given in grams per kilogram of body weight per day (g/kg/day). To get your weight in kilograms, divide pounds by 2.2.

Who	Daily range	Source
Healthy adults (minimum to avoid deficiency)	0.8 g/kg/day	US National Academies RDA [1]

Who	Daily range	Source
Healthy adults over 65	1.0–1.2 g/kg/day	PROT-AGE Study Group [2]; ESPEN expert group [3]
Older adults with acute or chronic illness	1.2–1.5 g/kg/day (more for severe illness, less with severe kidney disease)	PROT-AGE [2]; ESPEN [3]

PROT-AGE also suggests spreading protein out, with about **25–30 g of protein per meal** [2], rather than eating most of it at dinner.

Worked example: a 180 lb person weighs about 82 kg. At 1.0–1.2 g/kg that is roughly **82–98 g of protein a day**, or about 27–33 g at each of three meals. Your doctor or a registered dietitian can tell you which range fits you, since needs during weight loss vary from person to person.

3. Protein for small appetites

If you feel full quickly, a big plate is hard. These tips help:

- **Protein first.** Eat the protein part of your meal before the rest.
- **Small and often.** Try 4–6 mini-meals or snacks instead of 3 big meals.
- **Sip it.** Liquids and soft foods are often easier: shakes, soups, yogurt.
- **Pick dense foods.** Choose foods with lots of protein in a small amount.

Easy high-protein ideas

Food	About how much protein*
Plain Greek yogurt, 3/4 cup (170 g)	~17 g
Cottage cheese, 1/2 cup	~12–14 g
2 large eggs	~12 g
Canned tuna or salmon, 3 oz	~20 g
Cooked chicken breast, 3 oz	~26 g
Milk, 1 cup	~8 g
String cheese, 1 stick	~6–7 g
Edamame, 1/2 cup shelled	~9 g
Lentil or bean soup, 1 cup	~9–12 g

*Approximate values from USDA FoodData Central [4]; check your product labels.

Mini-meal ideas

- Greek yogurt with a spoon of nut butter and berries
- Egg and cheese scramble in a small tortilla
- Tuna salad on two whole-grain crackers
- Cottage cheese with peaches or tomatoes
- A cup of lentil soup with a cheese stick
- A small smoothie: milk, Greek yogurt and frozen fruit

4. 10-minute beginner strength routine (for people over 50)

The US Physical Activity Guidelines recommend muscle-strengthening activity at least **2 days a week** for adults, and that older adults also include balance training [5]. This routine needs only a sturdy chair and a wall.

Safety first: get your doctor's OK before starting. Move slowly, breathe normally (don't hold your breath), and stop if you feel pain, dizziness or chest discomfort. Keep a chair or counter nearby for support.

Move	How to do it	Amount
Warm-up march	March in place, swinging your arms gently.	1 minute
Sit-to-stand	From a sturdy chair, stand up and sit back down slowly. Use your hands at first if needed.	2 sets of 8–10
Wall push-up	Hands on a wall at shoulder height, bend your elbows to bring your chest toward the wall, then push back.	2 sets of 8–10
Heel raises	Holding a counter, rise up onto your toes, then lower slowly.	2 sets of 10
Seated knee lift	Sit tall, lift one knee a few inches, lower it. Switch legs.	10 each leg
Side-step	Holding a counter, step sideways 3 steps and back.	1 minute
Balance hold	Holding a counter, stand on one foot for up to 10 seconds. Switch.	3 each side

Move	How to do it	Amount
Cool-down	Gentle shoulder rolls and deep breaths.	1 minute

Rest about 30–60 seconds between sets. When it feels easy, add a few reps, slow the movement down, or hold light weights (like water bottles).

Sources

[1] Institute of Medicine (US National Academies). *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2005.

[2] Bauer J, Biolo G, Cederholm T, et al. Evidence-based recommendations for optimal dietary protein intake in older people: a position paper from the PROT-AGE Study Group. *J Am Med Dir Assoc*. 2013;14(8):542–559.

[3] Deutz NEP, Bauer JM, Barazzoni R, et al. Protein intake and exercise for optimal muscle function with aging: recommendations from the ESPEN Expert Group. *Clin Nutr*. 2014;33(6):929–936.

[4] US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central. fdc.nal.usda.gov.

[5] US Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: HHS; 2018.

Important: Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider before changing your diet or starting exercise, and ask how much protein is right for you, especially if you have kidney disease, take any prescription, are pregnant or nursing, or have a medical condition. This guide is general education, not medical advice. *These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

From KEEP · drinkkeep.com