How Much Protein Do You Really Need?

By: DOC Dietary Service Manager—Brent E. Carney, RDN, CD

Judging by all of the protein bars, protein shakes, and protein-fortified convenience foods, you might get the impression that we are all at risk of becoming protein deficient. This is far from the truth. In fact, most of us are getting much more protein that we actually need, and most Americans actually consume twice as much protein as they need. Protein is an important part of our diet, though. The key is getting enough, but not too much, in your diet.

How much protein do you need?
The average, healthy adult requires 0.8 grams (g) of protein/kilogram (kg) of body weight. This means that:

- A 120-pound (lb) person would require 44 g of protein/day
- A 150-lb person would require 55 g of protein/day
- A 190-lb person would require 69 g of protein/day

What does protein do?

- Regulates bodily functions
- Carries nutrients, oxygen, and waste
- Builds and develops muscles
- Keeps skin, hair, and nails healthy and firm
- Helps to make blood
- Helps to build organs

What happens if I eat too much protein?

- Puts your body under stress
- May result in a decrease in kidney function
- Increases risk of dehydration
- Can increase risk of high blood pressure
- Increase cholesterol if protein sources are also high in fat
- Increases the risk of osteoporosis

What are some good sources of protein?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meats</th>
<th>Legumes</th>
<th>Nuts</th>
<th>Seeds</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat, poultry, fish</td>
<td>Beans, hummus, lentils, peanuts, peanut butter, peas, soy products -including tofu</td>
<td>Walnuts, almonds</td>
<td>Sunflower, sesame, pumpkin</td>
<td>Cheese, cottage cheese, milk, yogurt</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is recommended that most average, healthy people consume no more than 30% of their average caloric intake from protein, however most people only require 10-15% of total calories from protein.
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is on the menu for Christmas (December 25th)?**

Menu changes for the Christmas meal will affect mainline meal participants. The meal will consist of:

- Turkey or Roast Beef
- Mashed Potatoes & Gravy
- Bread Dressing
- Sweet Potatoes
- Salad & Dressing
- Cranberry Sauce
- Green Beans
- Dinner Roll & Margarine
- Seasonal Fruit
- Holiday Pie

**Why do we eat turkey at Christmas?**

The tradition started in England when King Henry VIII was the first to eat turkey on Christmas Day. Traditionally, English people would eat boar’s head, goose, swan, or even peacock, though goose was the most common. In the 1950’s turkey became the more popular choice. Approximately 22 million turkeys are eaten during the Christmas season.

**Why are carrots served so frequently?**

**Benefits of carrots:**

Carrots contain vitamin A, antioxidants, and other nutrients. Evidence suggests that eating more antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, can help reduce the risks of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Carrots are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Source: Medical News Today, December 5, 2017

**Can you guess…?**

What is the world record for longest candy cane ever made?

**Answer:** 15 feet

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**Featured Vendor: NORPAC Foods, Inc.**

**Did you know that the frozen vegetables served on DOC’s menus come from farmers in the Pacific Northwest?**

NORPAC Foods, Inc., is a farmer-owned cooperative founded in 1924. Headquartered in Salem, Oregon, NORPAC is Oregon’s largest fruit and vegetable processor. They operate three (3) processing facilities in the Willamette Valley, and subsidiary operations, Hermiston Foods, LLC in Hermiston, Oregon and Quincy Foods, LLC in Quincy, Washington. NORPAC and its subsidiaries employ 1,500 full-time employees year-round and 2,500 seasonal employees during the processing season.

Sourced from 45,000 acres of farmland located in the Northwestern United States, NORPAC, and its associate farmers and processors, produce more than 600 million pounds of products each year.

US foodservice companies, retailers, club stores, and food makers purchase NORPAC’s packaged products. NORPAC exports its products to half a dozen countries, such as Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Puerto Rico, Latin America, and Canada.