

PROTEIN: *Getting the facts straight!*

With the traditional Western diet, the average American consumes about double the protein his or her body needs. Additionally, the main sources of protein consumed tend to be animal products, which are also high in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Most individuals are surprised to learn that protein needs are actually much less than what they have been consuming.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein for the average, sedentary adult is only 0.4 grams per pound of body weight. To find out your average individual need, simply perform the following calculation:

Body weight (in pounds) X 0.4 = recommended protein intake
 EXAMPLE: A 130-pound person needs about 52 grams of protein per day

However, even this value has a large margin of safety, and the body's true need is even lower. Some people do fine on less than these recommendations, as those above are meant to cover the needs of 97% of the population. Vegan athletes may benefit from more than these amounts, and needs are also increased for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

The plant foods highest in protein are legumes (beans, peanuts, soy foods such as tofu) and nuts, but grains and vegetables also contribute significant amounts.

Plant-Based Food	Protein in grams
1 cup of firm tofu	40 g
1 cup cooked tempeh	30 g
1 cup cooked soybeans	29 g
1 cup cooked lentils	18 g
1 cup pinto beans	15 g
1 cup black beans	15 g
1 cup cooked chickpeas	15 g
3 slices veggie deli slices	14 g
Soy yogurt	12 g
1/2 cup almonds	12 g
1/2 cup sunflower seeds	12 g
1 cup quinoa	11 g
1 bagel	9 g
8 ounces soymilk	8 g (same as cow's milk!)
2 TBSP. peanut butter	8 g
1 cup oatmeal	7 g
1 cup bulgur (make some Tabouli!)	6 g
1 cup broccoli	6 g
1 cup brown rice	5 g
1 medium potato	4.5 g
1/2 ounce w alnuts (7 halves)	4.3 g
1 cup white rice	4.1 g
1/2 ounce almonds (12 nuts)	3 g
1 cup chopped cooked kale	2.5 g
1 medium taco shell	1 g
1 medium carrot	0.6 g

Vegans Might not Meet Protein Needs If...

- Food intake does not meet energy needs such as in cases of anorexia nervosa, depression, poverty, lack of appetite due to illness, or dieting.

- Higher-protein plant foods are not included in sufficient amounts. This can happen when:
 - *Most food eaten is junk food such as French fries, soda, etc.
 - *Protein is believed to be unimportant and/or higher protein foods are avoided (such as in some fruitarian or raw food diets).
 - *Beans are avoided. (Other high-protein foods should be used.)