# Adding Calories & Protein (Plant Foods)

Getting enough calories and protein is important for your health. It can help you:

- fight infection
- have more energy
- heal and recover
- maintain muscle
- prevent muscle loss

There are many illnesses, conditions, or treatments that can:

- lower your appetite
- increase how much nutrition you need
- make you feel tired more easily

Having more calories and protein can help you feel better and have more energy.

## Plant-based foods

Many plant foods have nutrients that benefit health. These include:

- protein
- fibre
- vitamins
- minerals

The following tips will help you get more protein and extra calories when eating plant-based foods.

To learn about other nutrients, like fibre, vitamins, and minerals, go to ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts.

When people choose foods just from plants, this is called a plant-based or vegan diet.

## How much protein do I need?

Try to eat meals with **20–30 grams (g) protein** and snacks with **at least 10 grams (g) protein** daily.

Check out page 2 for plant-based protein foods and page 3 for sample meals.

## Read food labels

Food labels give you information to help you compare foods and make healthier choices.

For foods that have a label, you can use the Nutrition Facts table to see how many grams of protein are in 1 serving of that food.

This Nutrition Facts table is from the “Squash, Lentil, and Chickpea Soup” recipe (page 3).

Serving size

Amount of protein in that serving

| Nutrition Facts | |
|---|---|
| Per 1/6 recipe (1 ¾ cup) | |
| **Calories 360** | **% Daily Value*** |
| **Fat 6 g** | 9 % |
| Saturated 0.5 g +Trans 0 g | 3 % |
| **Carbohydrate 60 g** | |
| Fibre 12 g | 48 % |
| Sugars 8 g | 8 % |
| **Protein** 24 g | |
| **Cholesterol** 0 mg | |
| **Sodium** 620 mg | 8 % |
| Potassium 867 mg | 20 % |
| Calcium 93 mg | 8 % |
| Iron 7 mg | 40 % |
| *5% or less is **a little**, 15% or more is **a lot** | |

If you avoid animal foods or ingredients, look for products labelled “vegan.” In Canada, the term “vegan” is regulated, but “plant-based” is not, so plant-based foods may still have animal ingredients in them.

## Cooking and recipes

To learn how to prepare and cook plant-based protein foods, go to Canada.ca/FoodGuide and search for Cooking with plant-based protein foods.

For recipes, check out:

- ahs.ca/MoreProteinRecipes
- ahs.ca/Recipes
- Canada.ca/FoodGuide, search “recipes”
- NourishOnline.ca/Recipes

# Plant-based protein foods

Choose food or drinks from the list below to help you get more protein at meals and snacks.

| Foods or ingredients | Serving size | Protein in grams (g) |
|---|---|---|
| Beans (legumes) like adzuki, black, fava, and Lima | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 9–11 |
| Chickpeas, canned, cooked, or hummus | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 9–11 |
| Chickpea flour (besan) | ½ cup (125 mL) | 11 |
| Durum wheat | ½ cup (125 mL) | 14 |
| Falafel (chickpea patty) | 3 patties (51 g) | 7 |
| Green peas | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 6 |
| Hemp hearts/seeds | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 7 |
| Lentils, canned or dried | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 13 |
| Nuts and seeds, like walnuts and peanuts | ¼ cup (60 mL) | 5–8 |
| Nut butter, like almond or peanut | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 6–8 |
| Nutritional yeast | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 4 |
| Pumpkin seed butter | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 8 |
| Seitan (wheat gluten), regular or original | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 24–27 |
| Seitan, fried or sauteed | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 17 |
| Semolina (durum wheat flour) | ½ cup (125 mL) | 11 |
| Soybean butter | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 8 |
| Soybeans, green (edamame) | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 17 |
| Soy cheese | 1 cube (1.5 oz) | 5 |
| Soy or tofu yogurt | 1 cup (250 mL) | 10 |
| Split peas (legume), dried | ¾ cup (175 mL) | 14 |
| Tahini (sesame seed butter) | 2 Tbsp (30 mL) | 5 |
| Tempeh, cooked | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 27 |
| Textured vegetable protein (TVP) | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 38 |
| Tofu, fried | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 25 |
| Tofu, regular: medium firm, firm, or extra firm | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 12 |
| Tofu, silken: firm or extra firm | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 10–11 |
| Tofu, silken: soft | ⅔ cup (150 g) | 7 |
| Whole grains, like amaranth, brown rice, buckwheat, kamut, millet, quinoa, and teff | ½ cup (125 mL) | 2–5 |

| Fortified plant-based beverages | Serving size | Protein in grams (g) |
|---|---|---|
| Soy | 1 cup (250 mL) | 7 |

Many plant-based beverages are low in protein. Compare Nutrition Facts tables to choose a product that has more protein than others.

## Nutrition supplement drinks and protein powders

Check ingredient lists to ensure they are not using whey or casein, which are animal-based proteins. The following are common protein sources in plant-based products:

- brown rice
- hemp
- legumes, like fava beans
- nuts, like almond and peanut
- pea
- seeds, like chia and sunflower
- soy

Examples of plant-based nutrition supplements include protein powders such as Thrive® or Vega®, and nutrition drinks like Sperri®. Talk to a dietitian for ideas of which plant-based products may help you get more nutrition.

# Extra calories (plant foods)

Choose items from the list below to help you get more plant-based calories at meals and snacks.

## Fats, oils, and condiments

- Avocado or guacamole
- Cashew cream
- Coconut (dried or fresh)
- Coconut milk, cream, yogurt
- Flaxseeds (ground or whole)
- Full fat salad dressings and condiments (dairy-free)
- Margarine, made from non-dairy sources
- Oils, like canola, flax, hemp, olive, or peanut
- Whipped dessert topping (dairy-free)

## Desserts, sweets, and sugars

- Cakes, cupcakes, cookies, pastries (dairy-free)
- Chia seed pudding
- Dairy-free and dark chocolate, chocolate-covered raisins or nuts
- Jam, jelly
- Syrups, like agave or maple
- Vegan ice cream, like from coconut or soy

## Other foods

- Dairy-free or vegan pesto
- Dried fruit: apricot, cranberries, dates, figs, raisins
- Granola, muesli, trail mix, energy balls
- Granola bars
- Higher protein cereals, such as Special K® Protein, Quaker® Fibre & Protein Instant Oatmeal, and Kashi GO®
- Wheat germ, oat bran

# Sample meal and snacks

Each sample meal has at least 20 g protein and each sample snack has at least 10 g protein.

| Meal | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meal 1 (Breakfast)** | • Tofu, avocado, and black bean breakfast burrito made with textured vegetable protein (TVP) in place of the egg<br>• Fruity tofu smoothie | • Avocado toast<br>– 1 ripe avocado, 2 slices whole grain bread, 1 tsp (5 mL) olive oil, 1 Tbsp (15 mL) hemp hearts<br>• Mocha latte | • Banana, peanut butter, and maple oatmeal<br>• Chai latte |
| **Meal 2 (Lunch)** | • Kale and chickpea curry<br>• ½ cup (125 mL) cooked quinoa<br>• Chocolate peanut butter pie | • Corn and lentil soup<br>• Homemade smoothie (see page 4) | • Soba noodles with tempeh |
| **Meal 3 (Supper)** | • Squash, lentil, and chickpea soup | • Roasted red pepper and walnut quesadillas, made with soy cheese<br>• Tabbouleh with barley and chickpeas | • Black bean enchiladas made with soy cheese<br>• 1 cup (250 mL) fortified soy beverage |

## Snack ideas

- Chickpea dip (hummus) with whole wheat pita, ½ cup (125 mL)
- Create your own smoothie (page 4)
- Energy bars
- Oat and pumpkin no-bake bites, 4 pieces
- Nutrition supplement drink
- Peanut butter power balls made with maple syrup
- Tofu berry sheet tart made with maple syrup, 2 pieces
- Trail mix

# Create your own smoothies

Follow the directions below to help you make a smoothie with at least 500 calories and 20 g protein.

1. **Choose 1–2 higher protein foods, like:**
   - ¾ cup (175 mL) canned white beans or soybeans, rinsed
   - ⅔ cup (150 g) extra firm silken tofu
   - 2 Tbsp (30 mL) nut butter
   - 1 cup (250 mL) soy or tofu yogurt
   - 1 scoop plant-based protein powder

   See page 2 for more high protein food ideas and recipe links.

2. **Add 1 cup (250 mL) liquid, like:**
   - fortified soy beverage
   - plant-based nutrition supplement drink

3. **Add 1 cup (250 mL) fresh, canned, or frozen fruit, like:**
   - banana
   - berries
   - mango
   - peach

4. **Add 1–2 extra calorie foods, like:**
   - 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive or canola oil
   - 1 Tbsp (15 mL) wheat germ
   - 1 Tbsp (15 mL) hemp hearts
   - ½ avocado

5. **Put all ingredients into a blender. Blend until smooth.**

# More information

- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a self-referral form on ahs.ca/811.
- Visit ahs.ca/Nutrition.