

Ways to Increase Protein

Protein is essential for a wide range of functions, including building and repairing cells and maintaining muscle mass. You can typically meet your protein needs by including a good source of protein with each meal and with snacks. Your oncology dietitian can help determine if your protein needs are greater, depending on your diagnosis and treatment plan.

Protein Sources	Ideas For Use
Hard or semisoft cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Melt on sandwiches, breads, muffins, tortillas, hamburgers, other meats or fish, vegetables, eggs, desserts. ■ Grate and add to soups, sauces, casseroles, vegetable dishes, mashed potatoes, rice, noodles, or meatloaf. ■ Nibble on a chunk of cheese or a cheesestick with crackers and fruit. ■ Choose low-fat varieties if you're watching calories.
Cottage cheese/ ricotta cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mix with or use to stuff fruits and vegetables. ■ Add to casseroles, spaghetti, noodles, egg dishes such as omelets and scrambled eggs. ■ Use in gelatin, puddings, cheesecake, and pancake batter. ■ Use to stuff crepes and pasta shells or manicotti.
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use milk instead of water in drinks and in cooking. ■ Use in preparing hot cereals, soups, cocoa, and pudding. ■ Add cream sauces to vegetables and other dishes. ■ Low- and nonfat dairy products are preferred unless you are trying to prevent weight loss.
Nonfat instant dry milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Add to regular milk and milk drinks, such as pasteurized eggnog and milkshakes. ■ Use in casseroles, meatloaf, breads, muffins, sauces, cream soups, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, pudding, custard, and milk-based desserts.
Meal-replacement drinks, supplements, and protein powder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use "instant breakfast" powder in milk drinks and desserts. ■ Mix commercial supplements (e.g., Ensure or Boost) with milk and fruit for a high-protein drink. Add ice cream to boost calories. ■ Add a scoop of vanilla- or chocolate-flavored whey protein powder to milk, shakes, and smoothies. Unflavored and chicken broth-flavored whey powders are also available. ■ A high-protein bar makes an easy, portable snack.

Protein Sources

Ideas For Use

Ice cream, yogurt, and frozen yogurt

- Make a milkshake or smoothie! Blend with milk and fruit such as berries, bananas, or other soft fruits.
- Add to carbonated beverages, such as ginger ale or root beer.
- Add to cereal, soft or cooked fruit, gelatin desserts, and pies.
- Sandwich ice cream or frozen yogurt between cookies or graham crackers.

Eggs

- Add chopped, hard-boiled eggs to salads, vegetables, and casseroles.
- Try a quiche as a main dish.
- Add extra eggs or egg whites to pancake and French toast batter.
- Add extra egg whites to scrambled eggs and omelets.
- Make a rich custard with eggs and high-protein milk.
- Add extra hard-boiled yolks to deviled-egg filling and sandwich spreads.
- Avoid raw or undercooked eggs, which may contain harmful bacteria, as your treatment may make you more susceptible to foodborne illnesses.

Nuts, seeds, and wheat germ

- Add to casseroles, breads, muffins, pancakes, cookies, and waffles.
- Sprinkle on fruit, cereal, ice cream, yogurt, vegetables, salads, and toast.
- Keep nuts at your desk or carry them with you for snacks.
- Roll a banana in chopped nuts.
- Use in place of breadcrumbs.
- Blend with parsley or spinach, herbs, and cream for a noodle, pasta, or vegetable sauce.
- Quinoa is a high-protein grain. Try it as a side dish in place of rice, use as a base for salads, or add to soups and stews.

Peanut butter

- Spread on sandwiches, toast, muffins, crackers, waffles, pancakes, or fruit slices.
- Use as a dip for raw vegetables, such as carrots or celery.
- Blend with milkshakes and other beverages.
- Swirl through soft ice cream and yogurt.
- PB2 is a powdered peanut product high in protein.

Meat, poultry, and fish

- Add chopped, cooked meat or fish to vegetables, salads, casseroles, soups, sauces, or biscuit dough.
- Use in omelets, soufflés, quiches, or sandwich fillings.
- Wrap in pie crust or biscuit dough as turnovers.
- Add to stuffed baked potatoes.

Beans/legumes

- Add peas, lentils, beans, edamame, or tofu to soups and salads, casseroles, pasta, and grain dishes.
- Hummus makes a great dip with carrot sticks or pita chips. Use as a spread on wraps.
- Mash cooked beans with cheese and milk.

Adapted from the National Cancer Institute: *Eating Hints Before, During, and After Cancer Treatment*, cancer.gov.