

## [Nutrition for Vegetarians](#)

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# Nutrition for Vegetarians

Can you get enough in a vegetarian diet? Let us see how you can make sure - not only in quantity of protein, but in quality as well. The word protein comes from the Greek proteios, meaning the primary or chief constituent of plant and animal bodies. It is one of the first nutrients discovered and recognized as vital. Protein-rich foods not only supply protein but often provide other essential nutrients as well.

Protein is the essential building material for body tissues, organs and fluids. Just as the alphabet's letters make up words, protein components called amino acids combine in different ways to determine the body's characteristics.

Quality: For your body to use protein most efficiently, amino acids must be present in the proper types and mounts - two factors which determine the quality or completeness of protein foods. The higher a protein's quality, the better its ability to build and maintain tissues. First-ranked in quality: egg protein; then: milk protein, fish, meat, legume, grain and vegetable proteins. Animal protein - milk and milk products included - is better in quality than vegetable protein from legumes, grains and vegetables.

But Mother Nature has given that the quality of vegetable protein can almost equal that of animal protein if different type of protein foods are combined in the proper way in the same meal. Examples of complimentary proteins: rice (grain) with beans (legume); soup and salad (vegetable) with bread (grain). The quality of proteins is further enhanced by adding milk or milk products to the meal. Example: rice or dhal (grain) with curry (vegetable) and yogurt (milk protein). In traditional menus from many countries we find such protein combinations locking in high protein quality. Examples: pasta, cheese and a vegetable (Italian); fish and rice (Oriental); tortillas, beans and cheese (Mexican); chappathi, curry and raita (N. Indian); idli, sambar, rice and yogurt (S. Indian). Even in snacks you need not sacrifice protein quality if you choose complimentary protein combinations such as

in pizza (grain and milk product); cheese and crackers (grain and milk product) and almond cheer (nuts and milk).

Needs: Protein needs vary in different stages of life and are higher for children and for mothers during pregnancy and lactation. Normal individual daily protein needs range as follows: Birth to 1 year old: 13-23 grams Girls and women over 14: 46 grams 1 year to 14 years: 23-45 grams Pregnant women: 76 grams Boys and men 14 and over: 55 grams Lactating women: 66 grams

What if you don't take enough protein every day? In children, severe deficiency stunts growth; in pregnancy, it affects the outcome; when it diminishes milk supply. Protein deficiency symptoms are not always apparent, but more severe ones are inadequate body growth, hair and nail quality and susceptibility to infection.

You can get 45-55 grams of protein by a daily intake that includes the following items or their equivalent: 2-3 glasses of milk or equivalent in cooked milk products (16-24 grams), 1 cup of cooked beans, peas or other legumes (14 grams), 4 slices of bread (8-9 grams) and 2 cups of vegetables cooked (8 grams).

Remember: 1) Combine complimentary protein types in the same meal to provide the highest quality protein. 2) For mothers: get the extra protein you need daily when pregnant or lactating. 3) Don't neglect calories from carbohydrates and fats or else your protein foods will be diverted for energy as needed. 4) Don't neglect protein for children, especially vital for body development.

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