

# Healthy Protein Muscle Builders



## Healthy Protein Pledge #3:

This month, I WILL:

- ✓ Complete one of the two activities in this month's toolkit, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, with my child/ren.
- ✓ Help my child prepare this month's recipe, Colorful Southwestern Bean Salad.
- ✓ Make one or more days filled with different plant proteins.
- ✓ Make a meal that contains only plant foods – vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans – and no animal protein.
- ✓ Incorporate lean protein sources into our daily meals and snacks.
- ✓ Tell each other what our favorite bean is – and give two reasons why.

“Healthy protein foods like beans, nuts and yogurt help make my muscles strong so I can climb rocks, run and do lots of other fun activities!”

- Andy

Proteins that come from plants can provide similar functions in your body as animal proteins, but they have additional health benefits.

Your third *Healthy Kids Today – Prevent Cancer Tomorrow* toolkit focuses on lean protein and plant-based proteins and how they help grow a healthy body and protect us against cancer while making our meals delicious!

## Which Foods Are Considered Proteins?

Fish, poultry, lean cuts of beef, low-fat dairy products, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, soy products and whole grains offer many advantages as protein sources.

In your body, protein plays an important role:

- **Helps maintain a strong immune system:** Adequate protein is necessary to support the increased production of antibodies that occurs in response to a cold, flu or allergic reaction.

“I’m super strong because I eat power foods with protein, like low-fat milk and turkey sandwiches with dark leafy greens! I like healthy orange foods too.”

- Andy



- **Promotes cell growth, repair and maintenance:** Proteins in our bodies are active, not stagnant. They are constantly being broken down, repaired and replaced.
- **Improves heart health:** When you include more plant-based proteins rather than animal-based proteins, it keeps your heart healthy. Plant-based proteins are naturally cholesterol free and contain little to no saturated fat.
- **Aids muscle growth:** Your body needs protein to develop and maintain adequate muscle mass, especially during the developmental years. How much is needed varies with age, weight, activity level and fitness goals.

## What Are Healthy Substitutes for Meat Protein?

Legumes such as dried beans and split peas are high in protein. Legumes like black beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, soy beans (and soy foods like tofu and edamame) as well as split peas are all rich in phytonutrients ("fight-o-chemicals"), potassium, iron, zinc and plenty of cancer-preventing dietary fiber.

**Using high-protein plant foods can also save money. The average ounce of meat costs \$0.25, but an ounce of dry beans is only \$0.08 — that's 1/3 the cost of meat!**



## How to Choose More Healthy Proteins

Here are some ways to choose more lean and healthy plant proteins to protect against cancer:

- **Go meatless several times a week.** Choose delicious meals such as a veggie stir-fry or black bean burrito. You don't have to become a vegetarian; it's your overall pattern of eating that counts.
- **Use a rice or pressure cooker.** Let the rice cooker do the work for protein-rich grains such as quinoa. Dry beans can be cooked more quickly using a pressure cooker; they only take 15 minutes after presoaking.
- **Go nuts over nuts.** Try a variety of different nuts and nut butters. Add raw nuts to salads or make your own trail mix with at least 3 different kinds of nuts: walnuts and almonds and pecans. Try almond butter or peanut butter spread on whole-grain toast or mixed into a smoothie to make it a complete meal.

- **Use canned beans.** Buy beans canned with no added salt, or drain beans in a strainer and rinse well. Add them to a salad, make a quick bean dip or enjoy them paired with rice. Did you know that rice and beans when eaten together make a complete protein?
- **How much protein?** Most Americans get more than enough protein in their diets, but the challenge now is to choose leaner and healthier protein options like beans, soy, nuts and seeds. You can eat different plant proteins at different meals and still meet all your protein needs. For more info, visit [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org).
- **Eat more poultry and fish.** Choose turkey or chicken without the skin. Eat fish like tuna or salmon a least twice a week to increase your consumption of healthy omega-3 fats.
- **1/3 animal protein.** If you eat fish, poultry, lean red meat, cheese and other animal foods, make sure they take up only 1/3 or less of the space on your plate.
- **Limit consumption of red meats.** Red meats include beef, pork and lamb. As much as possible try to avoid processed meats such as cold cuts, bacon, sausage and ham.
- **Choose low-fat dairy products.** Buy 2%, 1% or nonfat cheeses, milk, cottage cheese, sour cream and yogurt. You'll get all the nutrients without the extra calories and saturated fat.
- **Choose leaner cuts of beef.** Cuts that include the words "round" or "loin" are leaner cuts; so is flank steak. Trim off solid visible fat before cooking. Healthy cooking methods include roasting, stir-frying, braising, steaming and stewing. Avoid cooking meats at high temperatures so they are charred, as in grilling: this forms carcinogens that may increase risk of cancer.

**When to soak beans.** Dry beans need to soak before cooking. Plan ahead of time and soak them in a pot of cold water overnight or soak them in hot water for 1-4 hours. Make sure you discard the soaking water and use fresh water for cooking. The longer you soak them the less gas they will produce when you eat them. Lentils and split peas do not require pre-soaking and take only 30-40 minutes to cook.



“Check out this month’s activities: Kid Power Recipe for Colorful Southwestern Bean Salad; Super Crew® Plant Protein Tracker Activity and Lesson Plan.”

-Jessie



Visit [www.superkidsnutrition.com](http://www.superkidsnutrition.com) for more fun activities with the Super Crew.

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