

Protein Foods

Tips for making wise choices

Go lean with protein

Start with a lean choice:

- ◆ The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts.
- ◆ The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham.
- ◆ Choose extra lean ground beef. The label should say at least "90 percent lean." You may be able to find ground beef that is 93 percent or 95 percent lean.
- ◆ Buy skinless chicken parts or remove the skin before cooking.
- ◆ Boneless, skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices.
- ◆ Choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham, or low-fat luncheon meats for sandwiches instead of luncheon meats with more fat, such as regular bologna or salami.

Keep it lean:

- ◆ Trim away all of the visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking.
- ◆ Broil, grill, roast, poach, or boil meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying.
- ◆ Drain off any fat that appears during cooking.
- ◆ Skip or limit the breading on meat, poultry, or fish. Breading adds fat and calories. It will also cause the food to soak up more fat during frying.
- ◆ Prepare beans and peas without added fats.
- ◆ Choose and prepare foods without high fat sauces or gravies.

Vary your protein choices

Choose seafood twice a week. Look for fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, and herring. Some ideas are:

- ◆ Salmon steak or filet
- ◆ Salmon loaf
- ◆ Grilled or baked trout
- ◆ Keep canned salmon, tuna and sardines on hand



Choose beans, peas or soy products as a main dish or part of a meal often. Some choices are:

- ◆ Chili with kidney or pinto beans
- ◆ Stir-fried tofu
- ◆ Split pea, lentil, minestrone or white bean soups
- ◆ Baked beans
- ◆ Black bean enchiladas
- ◆ Garbanzo or kidney beans on a chef's salad
- ◆ Rice and beans
- ◆ Veggie burgers or garden burgers
- ◆ Hummus (chickpeas) spread on pita bread

Choose unsalted nuts as a snack, on salads or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to these items:

- ◆ Use pine nuts in pesto for pasta.
- ◆ Add slivered almonds to steamed vegetables.
- ◆ Add toasted peanuts or cashews to a vegetable stir-fry instead of meat.
- ◆ Sprinkle a few nuts on top of low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt.
- ◆ Add walnuts or pecans to a green salad instead of cheese or meat.

What to look for on food labels

- ◆ Check the Nutrition Facts label for the saturated fat, *trans*-fat, cholesterol, and sodium content of packaged foods.
- ◆ Processed meats such as hams, sausages, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added sodium. Check the ingredients and Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake.
- ◆ Some fresh chicken, turkey and pork are enhanced with a salt-containing solution that adds sodium to the meat. Check the product label for statements such as "self-basting" or "contains up to __ percent of __."
- ◆ Lower fat versions of many processed meats are available. Look on the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less fat and saturated fat.

Keep it safe to eat

- ◆ Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- ◆ Do not wash or rinse meat or poultry.
- ◆ Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and counter tops in hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next one.
- ◆ Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices don't drip onto other foods.
- ◆ Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms. Use a meat thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through.
- ◆ Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- ◆ Plan ahead to defrost foods. Never defrost food on the kitchen counter at room temperature. Thaw food by placing it in the refrigerator, submerging air-tight packaged food in cold tap water, or defrosting on a plate in the microwave.
- ◆ Avoid raw or partially cooked eggs, foods containing raw eggs and raw or undercooked meat and poultry.
- ◆ Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children should avoid some types of fish and eat types lower in mercury. See <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm110591.htm>, or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD for more information.

Adapted from USDA's ChooseMyPlate.gov

