



LIVING STRONG
NORTH IDAHO

Protein Needs for Adults Over 50

Living Strong North Idaho Educational Resource

WHY THIS MATTERS

Protein plays a critical role in maintaining muscle mass, strength, and overall health as we age. Beginning around midlife, adults naturally begin losing muscle in a process known as sarcopenia. Without adequate protein intake, this loss of muscle can accelerate, contributing to reduced strength, slower metabolism, and decreased physical function.

Consuming adequate protein throughout the day helps support muscle maintenance, recovery from activity, metabolic health, and long-term physical independence.

WHAT RESEARCH SHOWS



Older adults require more protein than younger adults to support muscle maintenance



Higher protein intake helps reduce age-related muscle loss (sarcopenia)



Protein supports recovery from exercise and daily physical activity



Adequate protein intake supports metabolic health and body composition



Distributing protein intake evenly throughout the day improves muscle protein synthesis

Sources

- PROT-AGE Study Group — Protein Intake and Exercise for Optimal Muscle Function
- National Institute on Aging — Protein and Muscle Health
- Bauer et al., 2013 — Evidence-Based Recommendations for Optimal Dietary Protein Intake in Older Adults








KEY INSIGHT

Protein is essential for maintaining muscle, strength, and function as we age. Consuming enough protein — and spreading it throughout the day — helps support muscle repair, physical performance, and long-term independence.

HOW TO OPTIMIZE PROTEIN INTAKE

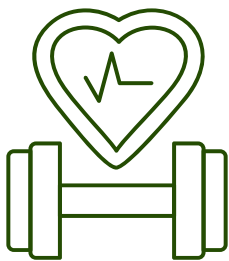
- ✓ Aim to include protein with each meal throughout the day
- ✓ Choose high-quality protein sources such as lean meats, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, and legumes
- ✓ Target 20–30 grams of protein per meal for most adults
- ✓ Include protein after exercise to support muscle recovery
- ✓ Combine protein intake with regular strength training for best results

HIGH-QUALITY PROTEIN SOURCES

-  Lean meats such as chicken, turkey, and lean beef
-  Fish and seafood such as salmon, tuna, and other fatty fish
-  Eggs and dairy including yogurt, milk, and cheese
-  Plant-based proteins such as beans, lentils, tofu, and legumes
-  Nuts and seeds as additional protein sources

Sources:

- National Institute on Aging — Protein and Healthy Aging
- Harvard Health Publishing — How Much Protein Do Older Adults Need?
- PROT-AGE Study Group — Dietary Protein Recommendations for Older Adults



KEY TAKEAWAY

Protein intake becomes increasingly important as we age. Consuming adequate protein throughout the day helps maintain muscle mass, support strength, improve recovery, and promote long-term health and independence. Combining proper nutrition with regular strength training provides the greatest benefit for healthy aging.

Living Strong North Idaho – A Program of the Inland Northwest Healthy Aging Alliance

Educational Disclaimer: The information provided in this resource is for educational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice.

Individuals should consult with a qualified healthcare professional before beginning any exercise, nutrition, or health program.