



Plant Powered Protein

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Whether you are a vegetarian, a vegan or are just trying to eat more meatless meals, consuming a diet without meat or fish can raise concerns about not getting enough protein. Have no fear, you can still meet your protein needs IF you structure your meals in the right way and don't fall into unhealthy vegetarian traps like eating tons of processed junk foods all day long (aka fries, chips and cookies which are conveniently vegetarian!).

How Much Protein Do We ACTUALLY Need?

Protein is essential for growth and maintenance of the body. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein for most people is 0.8 gram per kilogram of body weight but vegetarians and vegans have about **20% higher** protein needs than meat eaters due to the types of proteins consumed. Therefore, vegetarians and vegans should aim for about **1.0 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight**.

While protein needs can vary greatly depending on activity level, goals, age, disease state, and other factors, this formula will give you an idea of your minimal daily protein needs.

1. Take your weight in pounds and divide it by 2.2 to find your weight in kilograms.
2. Now multiply your weight in kilograms by 1.0.

To put this into perspective, a 150lb person would need at least 68 grams of protein daily.

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As [Robert Allison](#) stated so well, one of the first questions people ask when they decide to give up meat is "[where can a vegetarian get some protein around here?!?](#)" Well, there are tons of nutrient-dense options to choose from! Be careful about all the "fake meat" products that are on the market though. These vary in quality, but most are highly processed and nutrient void. Instead, look for products made with whole foods (beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, etc) or better yet just eat the whole foods themselves!

10 sources of whole food, plant-based proteins include:

1. **Tempeh:** 21gm protein in 4oz
2. **Tofu:** 10gm protein in 4oz
3. **Lentils:** 9gm protein in ½ cup, cooked
4. **Beans:** 8gm protein in ½ cup, cooked
5. **Steel Cut Oats:** 7gm protein in ¼ cup, dry
6. **Edamame:** 7gm protein in ½ cup, cooked
7. **Spinach:** 6gm protein in 1 cup, cooked
8. **Nuts:** 6gm protein in 1oz
9. **Quinoa:** 4gm protein in ½ cup, cooked
10. **Broccoli:** 4gm protein in 1 cup, chopped

Note: Eggs and dairy are also good sources of protein but aren't included in this post since it focuses on plant-based foods.

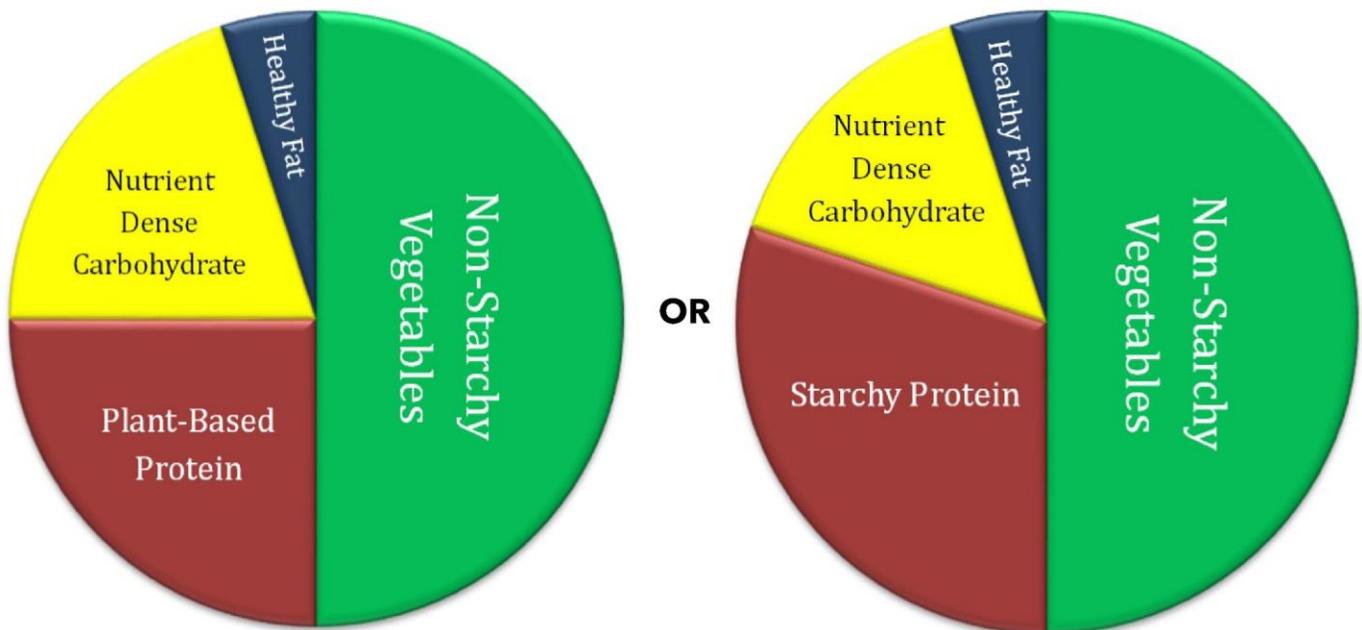
Peruse [this grocery list](#) for more ideas of whole food, plant-based protein sources to help stock a healthy, well-balanced vegetarian/vegan kitchen. Remember, variety is key so rotate as many types of protein as possible throughout your meals.

A Note about Carbs in Plant-Based Protein

Animal based proteins naturally contain very little carbohydrates (unless you've added some in a marinade or breading). However, most plant-based proteins contain both carbohydrates **AND** protein. This can get rather tricky when you're trying to plan healthy, well-balanced meals that meet your protein needs while not surpassing your carbohydrate limits for glucose management.

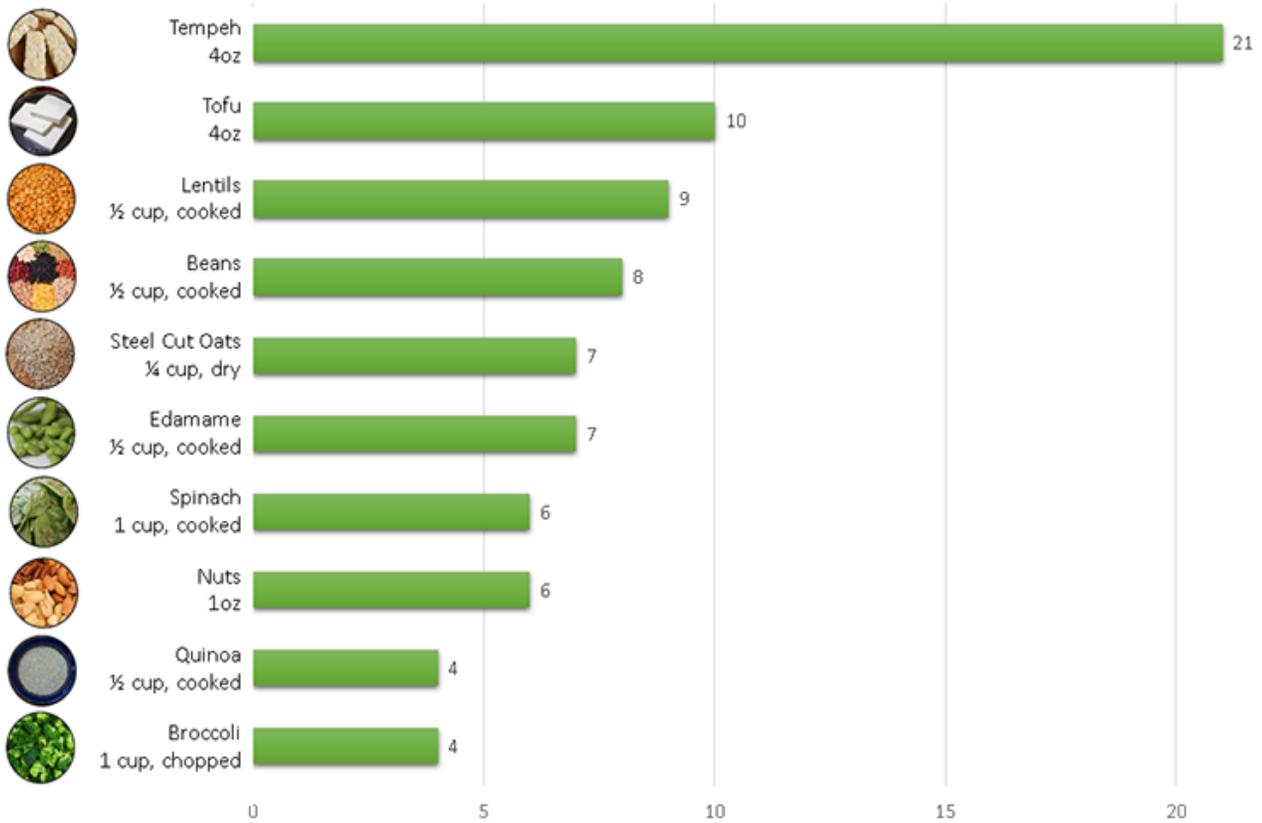
For example, the common vegetarian meal of rice and beans can very quickly exceed your recommended amount of carbohydrates per meal since both rice **AND** beans are sources of carbohydrates.

When planning meals, be careful to strike the right balance between macronutrients (i.e. carbs, protein and fat). If you're consuming a starchy protein like beans or lentils, **reduce your portion of other starches** like sweet potatoes, rice, or tortillas **by half or eliminate the additional starch all together**.



Check out the graphs below to compare protein and carbohydrate content and use it to while meal planning to determine if your protein selection is starchy (i.e. contains more carbs) or not.

Grams of Protein in a Standard Serving



Grams of Carbohydrates in a Standard Serving

