

Kidney Disease: Getting the Right Amount of Protein

Your body needs protein to build and repair muscles and bones along with other important body functions. But as the body uses protein, a waste product (blood urea nitrogen, or BUN) is made. If your kidneys can't filter wastes from your blood normally, the BUN level increases. If the level gets too high, you can become sick. Because of this, you need to control the amount of protein you eat each day. Use this handout to help you.



Measuring protein content

You know how many grams of protein to eat, but most food portions are measured in ounces. Use the chart below to help determine the protein content of some common foods.

Protein content measurements

Protein source	Amount in ounces	Amount in grams
Chicken breast	3 to 4 ounces	21 to 28 grams
Chicken thigh	2 to 2.5 ounces	14 to 18 grams
Fish	3 ounces	21 grams
Pork chop	2 to 2.5 ounces	14 to 18 grams
Roast beef	3 ounces	21 grams
Steak	3 to 4 ounces	21 to 28 grams
Hamburger	3 to 4 ounces	21 to 28 grams
Eggs	1 egg	7 grams
Cheese	1 ounce	7 grams
Most beans	4 ounces	7 to 10 grams
Tofu	2 ounces	5 grams

Protein source	Amount in ounces	Amount in grams
Most nuts	2 ounces	5 to 8 grams

If you eat too much protein

Eating too much protein may cause the following:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Mental confusion
- Increased potassium levels
- Increased phosphorus levels
- Increased time on hemodialysis
- Risk of speeding the loss of kidney function

If you eat too little protein

Eating too little protein may cause the following:

- Muscle loss and weakness
- Tiredness
- Weight loss
- Slower wound healing