

BALANCE PROTOCOL

25 Foods That Give You 25 Grams of Protein

A practical reference for GLP-1 patients -- grocery store foods only, no specialty items required.

Why protein is critical on GLP-1 therapy: GLP-1 medications suppress appetite without distinction -- your desire for protein falls just as much as everything else. Without a deliberate protein target based on your lean body mass, a significant portion of the weight you lose will be muscle rather than fat. Muscle loss is largely irreversible at standard caloric intake levels. The protein targets below are not suggestions. They are the minimum thresholds required to preserve the body composition that determines your long-term health outcomes.

Target per meal: 30 to 40 grams of protein per meal activates the mTOR-driven muscle protein synthesis signal. Below this threshold, even adequate total daily protein may fail to protect muscle. Distribute your protein target across 3 to 4 meals rather than front-loading one large serving.

ANIMAL PROTEINS -- NUMBERS 1 THROUGH 17

#	Food	Serving Size	Approx. Protein	Notes and Tips
1	Chicken breast, boneless skinless	3 oz cooked	~26g	Most versatile lean protein. Grill, bake, or air-fry. Pre-cooked rotisserie chicken works.
2	Canned tuna in water	1 can (5 oz), drained	~33g	Pantry staple. Buy in water, not oil. Wild-caught skipjack is lowest mercury.
3	Wild salmon, cooked	4 oz (palm-sized)	~29g	Adds DHA omega-3 alongside protein. Canned salmon is equally valid and cheaper.
4	Ground beef, 93% lean, cooked	3.5 oz	~25g	Complete amino acid profile including leucine. Drain fat after cooking.
5	Turkey breast, roasted	3.5 oz	~28g	Lean, mild, accessible. Deli-sliced turkey breast counts -- choose low sodium.
6	Shrimp, cooked	4 oz (approx. 16 large)	~24g	Highest protein-to-calorie ratio of any seafood. Fresh or frozen works equally.
7	Tilapia or cod, cooked	4 oz	~23g	Mild white fish available at every grocery store. Low cost, high protein.
8	Whole eggs	4 large	~24g	Complete protein with all essential amino acids. The original muscle food.
9	Egg whites	8 large (or 1 cup liquid)	~28g	Leucine-dense. Carton egg whites are convenient and shelf-stable in the fridge.
10	Cottage cheese, 2% milkfat	1 cup	~25g	Slow-digesting casein protein. Outstanding before bed or as a midday snack.
11	Greek yogurt, plain	1.5 cups	~25g	Choose plain to avoid sugar. Full fat or 2%. Protein content varies by brand.
12	Pork tenderloin, cooked	3.5 oz	~26g	One of the leanest cuts of pork. Often cheaper than chicken breast.

#	Food	Serving Size	Approx. Protein	Notes and Tips
1 3	Ham, deli-sliced (lean, low sodium)	5 oz	~27g	Easy, no-cook option. Choose lower-sodium varieties to limit salt intake.
1 4	Beef jerky, original	2.5 oz	~26g	Shelf-stable, portable protein. Watch sodium. Avoid jerky with added sugar.
1 5	Sardines, canned in water	1 can (3.75 oz), drained	~23g	Underrated. Omega-3 plus calcium from soft bones. Wild-caught, sustainable.
1 6	Mozzarella cheese, part-skim	3.5 oz	~24g	Higher protein than most cheeses. String cheese sticks = ~7g each, so 3-4 sticks.
1 7	Whey protein powder	1 scoop (approx. 30g)	~23-25g	Highest leucine content of any protein source. Use to fill gaps, not as foundation.

PLANT PROTEINS -- NUMBERS 18 THROUGH 25

#	Food	Serving Size	Approx. Protein	Notes and Tips
1 8	Edamame, shelled (fresh or frozen)	1.5 cups cooked	~25g	The best whole-food plant protein per cup. Find it in the frozen vegetable section.
1 9	Tempeh	5 oz	~26g	Fermented soy -- higher protein than tofu, better digestibility. Slice thin and pan-fry.
2 0	Firm or extra-firm tofu	9 oz (about 1.25 cups)	~25g	Press water out for better texture. Marinade absorbs best when pressed.
2 1	Lentils, any color, cooked	1.5 cups	~27g	Dual-purpose: 27g protein AND 23g fiber per 1.5 cups. The most efficient legume.
2 2	Black beans, cooked (or canned, rinsed)	2 cups	~30g	Affordable, filling, high in resistant starch. Canned counts -- rinse to reduce sodium.
2 3	Chickpeas / garbanzo beans, cooked	2 cups	~29g	Versatile. Roast them crispy, add to salad, or use canned hummus as a protein spread.
2 4	Pea protein powder	1 scoop (approx. 30g)	~20-25g	Hypoallergenic plant protein option. Less leucine than whey but broadly accessible.
2 5	Edamame pasta or lentil pasta, cooked	2 cups	~24g	Grocery store item. Much higher protein than wheat pasta. Check label -- brands vary.

PROTEIN STRATEGY ON GLP-1 THERAPY

Prioritize protein first at every meal. GLP-1 medications reduce total stomach capacity and accelerate satiety. If protein is not the first food you reach for, the appetite suppression will fill your available stomach space with lower-priority foods and protein will be crowded out.

Leucine is the trigger. The amino acid leucine is the primary activator of mTOR-driven muscle protein synthesis. The richest leucine sources in this list are whey protein, eggs, chicken breast, cottage cheese, and beef jerky. If you are only meeting your total protein target but not triggering the leucine threshold at each meal, muscle catabolism can persist even with adequate daily totals.

Protein supplements are a bridge, not a foundation. Whey and pea protein powders are legitimate tools for closing the gap when food intake is suppressed. Use them strategically -- mixed into oatmeal, yogurt, or a smoothie -- not as a meal replacement.