



# 8 Great Protein Snacks

Have you ever wondered why experts recommend eating protein at every meal and snack? Protein is arguably the most important of the three macronutrients (protein, fat, carbs), but did you know a percentage of the protein you eat gets turned into glucose? It turns out that the process is labor intensive (your liver does the conversion work) and so the rise in your blood sugar is slow and hardly noticeable compared to blood-sugar-spiking carbs.

The other thing about protein is it's filling and satisfying. "In my practice, I've noticed that when people consume healthy, protein-rich snacks like unsalted nuts or nut butters, they simply consume fewer carbs," says dietitian Susan Weiner, MS, RDN, CDE, a member of dLife's medical advisory board and author of *The Complete Diabetes Organizer* (Spry, September 2013). Weiner likes to recommend high-protein snacks that aren't thought of as snack foods: "For example, rolled up, fresh turkey dipped in hummus can be a great afternoon snack."

## 1. Don't Move My Cheese!

Fresh, real cheese may be the most satisfying food on earth. Creamy, sweet or a dose of tang ... and melted? A mouthful of heaven.

Whether it's a peelable stick of mozzarella string cheese, a toothpicked cube of exploding-flavor cheddar or a spoonful of cottage cheese with salt and pepper (hot sauce is great, too), **cheese** may just be the king of protein snacks.

One cup of shredded (whole milk) mozzarella contains 25g of protein and just 2g of carbs. That amount of cheddar contains 28g of protein and 1g of carb. The fresh cheeses are equally rich in protein but not quite as low in carbs. One-half cup of ricotta contains 14g of protein and 4g of carbs. One-half cup of cottage cheese (4% milkfat) contains 12g protein and 4g carbs.

## **2: Be Nutty**

From heart and blood vessel health to potential blood sugar control benefits, nuts reign supreme among snacks. Pack measured portions of mixed nuts or just your favorites. One-quarter cup of almonds contains about 8g of protein and 7g of carbs. Choose almonds with the skin on to get the full complement of their nutrients.

## **3: Don't Be Seedy**

Just have a seedy affair—with seeds! (Ba-dum-bum.) Seeds are packed with vitamins and minerals, along with healthy fats. Like nuts, they're high in calories, so it's best to eat them unsalted (less addictive) and dole out a small portion for yourself rather than eating out of a jar. Better yet, create your own **snack mix** out of your favorite nuts and seeds, and store your signature concoction in an air-tight container. Mini, dark chocolate chips (use sparingly!) can be a nice touch, too.

One-quarter cup of pumpkin seeds contains 9g protein and 6g of carbs; sunflower seeds contain 6g protein and 8g carbs.

## **4: An eggs-cellent idea.**

One large egg contains 6g of protein and zero carbs. More than half of an egg's protein is in the white, but the amazing array of other nutrients – including hard to find vitamin D – is found in the yolk. If you're not the type to chomp into a hard-boiled egg, chop it up and stir in some mayo and pepper. Scoop it up with a carrot stick and you'll have a mouthful of healthy goodness.

## **5: Edamame? Who's your daddy?**

If you didn't get the joke, you're not pronouncing it correctly: ed-uh-mom-ay. Fun to say and fun to eat, these mild beans can be cooked in their pods for a few minutes and then popped out and into your mouth with a little squeeze. One cup contains 17g of protein, 16g of carbs, and 8g of fiber.

## **6: When in doubt, do the can can.**

Think about it: a delicious, flaky, cooked fish that can sit at room temperature in a can for years. Whoever first decided to can tuna was clearly a genius.

Tuna is another underappreciated superfood, partly because of the concerns about mercury. Albacore tuna grow large and, over the course of their lives, eat a lot of mercury-containing fish. Smaller tuna has much lower levels. To get around the mercury issue, you can seek out lesser-known brands of tuna that use only smaller fish caught by sustainable fisheries. It will say so on the can (look for pole or troll caught). One

small can of tuna contains a whopping 35g of protein. An adult who weighs 150 pounds only needs a total of 55g of protein for the day!

## **7: You can skimp on shrimp.**

Buy a big, resealable bag of frozen shrimp (yes, they're pricey, so watch for sales) to keep in your freezer. Thaw just a portion or two at a time for a super healthy and delicious, any time snack. Tip: Make your own cocktail sauce with sugar-free ketchup or chili sauce, and you can get it down to about 1g carb per tablespoon. Four large shrimp contain 5g of protein and zero carbs.

## **8: Try yogurt and ch-ch-ch-chia.**

These fabulous seeds become gelatinous when they hit liquid, which means in a matter of minutes they can turn boring, old yogurt eating into slippery, crunching, mouth fun. A 2-tablespoon portion of **chia seeds** contains about 3g of protein, 8g of carbs and 7g of fiber; plus, they contain omega-3 fatty acids. One cup of plain, whole milk yogurt has 9g of protein and 11g of carbs (Greek-style yogurts contain about twice as much protein and a few less carbs).