PROTEIN

How to Make Smart Choices Beyond the Label

WHY PROTEIN MATTERS

- Protein helps build and repair muscles and supports overall health[1]
- It may help with fullness, weight management, and physical performance[1]
- The 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans highlight the importance of including protein foods in a balanced diet, but more isn't always better[2,3]

BE MINDFUL OF PROTEIN MARKETING

Protein is everywhere: cereal, snacks, drinks – even desserts.

Common claims:

- "High protein" (at least 20% of the DV for protein) or "excellent source" (≥20% of the DV for protein)
- "+ protein" or added grams on the front of the package

What to know:

- These claims don't always mean the food is healthy
- Some products have only small increases in protein
- "Protein" foods can still be high in sugar, sodium, or saturated fat

Nutrition Facts

6 servings per container

Serving size **1 bar (68g)**

Amount per serving

Calories **290**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 11g	**14%**
Saturated Fat 6g	**30%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 360mg	**16%**
Total Carbohydrate 30g	**11%**
Dietary Fiber 2g	**7%**
Total Sugars 18g	
Includes 17g Added Sugars	**34%**
Protein 20g	**40%**

Vitamin D 0mcg 0% • Calcium 60mg 4%
Iron 2.7mg 15% • Potassium 190mg 4%
Vitamin E 0.4mg 2% • Phosphorus 110mg 8%
Magnesium 15mg 4%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: SOY PROTEIN ISOLATE, ORGANIC INVERT CANE SYRUP, ORGANIC CANE SUGAR, ORGANIC BROWN RICE SYRUP, VEGETABLE GLYCERIN, PALM KERNEL OIL, ORGANIC SOY FLOUR, ORGANIC RICE FLOUR, CHICORY ROOT FIBER, NATURAL FLAVOR, ORGANIC PEANUTS, COCOA BUTTER, COCOA, ORGANIC PEANUT BUTTER, ORGANIC SOY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, ORGANIC HIGH OLEIC SUNFLOWER AND/OR SOYBEAN OIL, SALT, RICE STARCH, SOY LECITHIN, MIXED TOCOPHEROLS (ANTIOXIDANT).
CONTAINS: PEANUT, SOY. MAY CONTAIN: MILK, SESAME, TREE NUTS.

TIP:

If %DV is missing, it may be a sign the product isn't a meaningful protein source

Figure 1: Main protein source is soy protein isolate, a high-quality protein that provides 40% of the daily value (DV) of protein per serving

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: HELPFUL VS. "PROTEIN-WASHED" FOODS

Look beyond grams: check % Daily Value (%DV)

- %DV* shows how much a food contributes to your daily protein needs
- It also reflects protein quality (how well your body can use it)[4]

**%DV is based on a standard 2,000-calorie daily diet.*

Simple tips for smarter choices

- Don't rely on front-of-pack claims alone
- Check the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list
- Ask: Does this food help me meet my nutrition needs?
- Focus on your overall eating pattern – not just one nutrient
- Choose high-quality protein sources like soy (tofu, edamame, soymilk, etc.), eggs, meat, poultry, fish, beans/lentils, and dairy

BOTTOM LINE

Protein is important, but quality and overall nutrition matter just as much.

Choosing balanced, nutrient-rich foods will support your health more than seeking out protein claims.

References

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