# Benefits of Plant Protein

Garden Tacos

Marin Easton, RDN

# What is Protein & Why Do We Need It?

# What it does:

01 **Builds and repairs muscles, skin, hair, and other tissues**

02 **Makes enzymes, hormones, and antibodies for immune health**

03 **Helps transport oxygen and nutrients in the blood**

04 **Supports growth, healing, and everyday body functions**

# What is Plant Protein?

- Made up of the same amino acids as animal protein – your body can use them just as well
- Some plants (like soy and quinoa) are complete proteins
    - They have all the essential amino acids
- Others can be combined to make a complete protein
    - Beans + rice, corn tortillas + pinto beans, whole wheat bread + peanut butter, oatmeal + chia seeds

# Great Plant Protein Sources

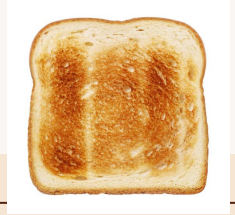
| | |
|---|---|
|  | Lentils - 18 grams protein per cup |
|  | Soy (tofu, edamame, miso) – 20 grams of protein per 1 cup of tofu – complete protein |
|  | Chickpeas – 39 grams of protein |
|  | Hemp Hearts –15-16 grams of protein per ½ cup – complete protein |

# Great Plant Protein Sources continued

| | |
|---|---|
|  | Quinoa – 4 grams protein per ½ cup - complete protein |
|  | Chia – 5 grams protein in 2 Tbsp - complete protein |
|  | Amaranth – 9 grams per 1 cup - complete protein |
|  | Nutritional Yeast – 8 grams per ¼ cup - complete protein |

*Images from istockphoto*

# Complete pairs

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

*Images from istockphoto*

# Health Benefits of Plant Protein

Plant proteins often come with added nutrients that animal proteins lack

# Why Choose Plant Protein?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Heart Health** | Often lower in saturated fat – leads to better cholesterol and blood pressure |
| **Digestive Health** | High in fiber – provides prebiotics |
| **Nutrient Rich** | Packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants |
| **Blood sugar control** | The high fiber protein combo helps prevent blood sugar spikes |
| **Sustainable** | Lower environmental impact than most animal proteins |
| **Cost** | Plant protein costs much less than most animal-based protein |

# Getting Enough Protein

- Most individuals need 0.8g/kg body weight daily
    - This changes depending on your health, age, and level of activity
- Variety is key
- Frequency is important – 20-40 grams per meal is a sweet spot

# Thanks!

## Do you have any questions?

# Would you like to learn more?

**American Heart Association**

https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/how-does-plant-forward-eating-benefit-your-health

**Mayo Clinic**

https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/meatless-meals/art-20048193

**United Nations**

https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/food

**Harvard School of Public Health**

https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/what-should-you-eat/protein/