

Plant-based foods can contain high amounts of protein

Q I have been following a plant-forward eating style for a while and would like to try going vegetarian or vegan. What are some protein sources I should consider and how does this compare to meat-based diets?

A You didn't share your motivation or inspiration to eliminate animal sources from your diet.



KATHY KOLASA
A healthy vegetarian or vegan diet does take some planning. Esha Thakkar, a fourth-year medical student at Brody School of Medicine, has returned to medical school “for the sole purpose of being there for patients at their most vulnerable moments.” Here is what she would like you to know about protein sources.

Protein is a key nutrient that helps build muscle, keeps our bodies strong and supports our immune system. It is a common impression that meat is the only good source of protein, but research supports that vegetarian and vegan diets can also provide adequate protein.

Vegetarian diets may include dairy products and eggs, while people following a vegan diet avoid all animal products. Many plant-based foods are high in protein, including



AS FOODSTUDIO

There are many plant-based foods that contain large amounts of protein. Lentils and beans are great protein sources that are nutritious and filling.

beans, lentils, tofu, chickpeas, nuts, seeds, quinoa, tempeh, edamame, oats and soy milk. Vegetarians who include eggs or dairy in their diets can additionally consume Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs and milk. The amount of protein in these products can be found on the Nutrition Facts label. A woman weighing 200 pounds would need 72-160 grams of protein a day.

There are many plant-based foods that contain large amounts of protein. Lentils and beans are great protein sources that are nutritious and filling. At one time it was thought that a vegetarian needed to mix and match sources of protein that differed in their amino acid profile. The most famous combinations were eating grains low in the amino acid lysine and high in

methionine with legumes that are high in lysine and low in methionine, like rice and beans.

But it is no longer necessary to eat them at the same time, so pick your protein sources based on the amounts provided. As an example, 1 cup of cooked lentils contains about 18 grams of protein, while 1 cup of black beans contains about 15 grams.

Tofu and tempeh are made from soybeans. They are protein-rich and can be used for meals instead of meat. Tofu has around 10-20 grams per serving based on firmness and tempeh has 15 grams of protein in a 3-ounce serving.

Additionally, seeds and nuts can provide protein along with healthy fats to support heart health. Two tablespoons of peanut butter has

about 8 grams of protein, while almonds have 6 grams of protein per ounce. Quinoa also has about 8 grams of protein per cooked cup. Greek yogurt has approximately 17 grams of protein per container and cottage cheese has 12-14 grams of protein per half cup.

Compared to meat-based diets, vegetarian and vegan diets are higher in fiber, some vitamins, antioxidants and healthy fats. These nutrients can help reduce the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Some research also shows that plant protein is linked to improved heart health and a lower risk of diabetes.

One other benefit of plant-based diets is reduced intake of processed and red meats. Diets high in processed meats such as sausage or bacon can increase the risk of heart disease over time. Implementing plant protein-based nutrients in one's diet by substituting some meat-based protein with plant-based protein may reduce the risk of death from cancer or heart disease.

It is important to acknowledge the benefits of a meat-based diet, as well. Fish, chicken and other meat are high sources of vitamin B12, iron and zinc. Those following a vegetarian or vegan diet may need to monitor their levels of vitamin B12, iron and omega-3. You may want to talk with your doctor about your intention to eliminate animal products and find out if you should take any dietary supplements. Or

you might ask a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) to review meal plans you might create using AI. Studies have shown that AI-generated meal plans do not always provide adequate calories or nutrients.

For athletes and other active individuals, a study showed that those consuming a high-protein vegan diet gained strength and muscle to a similar degree as those on a meat-based diet during resistance training.

It is important to note that the difference between plant-based and meat-based diets is not simply the protein sources. It is key to be balanced and consume quality nutrients, including minimally processed foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

When considering how to add more protein to one's diet, one way could be to add more plant proteins to meals. For example, adding beans to soups, cooking lentil pasta and using tofu in stir-fry meals are simple ways to add more protein in one's diet.

Overall, research has shown that both vegetarian/vegan and meat-based diets can support great health when one is consuming a balanced meal. There are a variety of ways one can incorporate protein sources, no matter what foods one may eat.

Professor emeritus Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolasaka@ecu.edu.

Congo's health workers labor with little pay, rest

JUSTIN KABUMBA AND OPE ADETAYO
Associated Press

MONGBWALU, Congo — Dr. Richard Lokudu, the medical director of Mongbwalu General Referral Hospital, has received barely any compensation for his work on the front line of one of Congo's deadliest Ebola virus outbreaks.

Lokudu and several of his colleagues work all day at the hospital treating an influx of patients. Notifications of suspected cases come even late at night.

“I have not received my allowance (and) what happened to others could happen to me as well,” Lokudu told The Associated Press. “Despite all the infection prevention and control measures we are implementing, we do not know what may happen.”

Health authorities believe the outbreak, which took the eastern region of Congo by surprise after spreading silently for weeks without detection, started in the bustling mining area of Mongbwalu in Ituri province.

CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS

Mongbwalu has emerged as the epicenter of the rare Bundibugyo type. The town attracts



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Richard Lokudu, center, the medical director of Mongbwalu General Hospital, speaks with UN peacekeepers Friday in Mongbwalu, Congo.

large numbers of laborers who work in large gold mines with muddy pools of gold deposits, narrow pits and caves. They live in low-income areas including crowded camps and have little access to proper health protocols.

The conditions increase the possibility of transmitting the disease, which spreads through close contact with bodily fluids of the sick and deceased such as sweat, blood, feces and vomit.

There also has been widespread skepticism regarding the disease, making the job of medical treatment more difficult for Lokudu and his colleagues, while some of the health workers and first responders have died from the disease.

“It is one thing to be far away and hear statistics

being reported, but what is happening on the ground is enormous,” Lokudu said. “People are sacrificing their rest and comfort for this cause. There should be recognition that they deserve compensation. These workers should receive their salaries regularly.”

The Congolese government didn't respond to a request for comment from the AP.

MINIMAL RESOURCES

Congolese authorities released new statistics on Sunday, saying there have been 488 confirmed cases, including 86 deaths, as of Friday. On Thursday, the Central African nation recorded 71 new cases in a day, which authorities said is a sign of “active community transmission.”

In neighboring Uganda, there have been 19 confirmed cases and two deaths.

Bundibugyo has no approved vaccines or treatment, so Congolese health workers have been targeting symptoms of the species. The government said at least five people have recovered from Ebola since the outbreak was officially confirmed by Congo's health ministry on May 15.

The disease “had a big head start,” according to World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Hospitals in the region couldn't test for the right type of Ebola that had begun spreading several weeks before confirmation.

Health workers are handling the disease with minimal resources because agencies have been scrambling to bring aid into the region. Masks, gloves, boots and medications were initially all in short supply.

“There has been an erosion of the health system,” said Heather Kerr, country director for the International Rescue Committee in Congo. “There has not been investment in the health system, and this has been going on for years.”

OBITUARIES

Mable Jean “Pete” Peaden

GREENVILLE - Mable Jean (Pete) Peaden, 84, went home to be with the Lord and Savior on Friday morning, June 5, 2026, peacefully at her home in Greenville.

A memorial service will be held on Tuesday at 2pm in the Wilkerson Funeral Home Chapel. Burial will follow in Pinewood Memorial Park. The family will receive friends Monday from 6 to 8 PM at Wilkerson Funeral Home.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Guy Peaden and Flossie Peaden; husbands, David Windham, William Mills, and Donald Peaden; children, Sandra Windham, Ray Windham and Donna Owens; brothers, Walter Peaden and Terry Peaden.

Mable retired from Dupont in Kinston NC in the early seventies. After leaving there she went to work with her mother at Peaden's Grill, Where she stayed working closely with her family till she retired in December of 2025. She loved her Lord and Savior and her family fiercely. She was known for her beautiful smile, which could brighten anyone's day. Every summer, she and her family would vacation at the beach; she loved the water. She also was never one to turn down a sale, she always knew when the best ones were happening. She will be missed by so many.

She is survived by her brother, Billy Peaden and wife, Nancy of Greenville, NC; children, Teresa Bayer, of the home and husband, Perry, of Beaufort, NC, Mike Peaden and wife, Dawn, of Ayden NC, Tonya Mills of Greenville, NC, Wayne Mills of Greenville, NC; grandchildren, Sherrie Smith and husband, John, of Kinston, NC, Brandon Campbell of Raleigh, NC, Zack Windham and wife, Amber, of Bend, OR, Holly Windham and fiancé, Hunter Sawyer, of Stokes, NC, Christian Bayer and wife, Kenzie, of Beaufort, NC, Crystal Chevrier and husband, Christopher, of Sandy, UT; great-grandchildren, Taylor Brisson, Sumer Smith, Anna Smith, Mason Smith, Brickson Windham, Kanyon Windham, Trek Windham, Riley Bayer, Ladon Bayer, Rosalie Bayer; and great-great-grandchildren, Kian Hansen and Brayden Hansen. Can't forget Her special 4 legged friend, Lil' Bit, along with many other family members.



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