

Boosting Protein

Julie Maree Wood



Protein is vital to many functions in our body including the synthesis of hormones, building of muscle, function of the immune system and the creation of happy brain messengers called neurotransmitters.

Many children are big fans of meat and other protein sources and so have enough in their diet. Others are fussy about the taste and texture of meat and proteins and so parents struggle to ensure they get what they need.

All animal products contain protein (dairy, meat, eggs, fish, poultry). Many plants also contain protein (grains like rice, wheat, millet, barley, oats; legumes like chick peas, butter beans, soy beans and also nuts, seeds, tofu and sprouts).

The three things to remember about protein in the diet are quality, quantity and variety.

Quality: The best protein is lean and fresh.

Quantity: Their daily intake should be about the size of the palm of their hand.

Variety: This is the hardest one with children. Ideally, try to vary their protein sources. Lean animal protein is fine a couple of times a week, but also introduce plant protein sources to boost the variety in their diet. Plant protein foods don't have any saturated fat and contain many vitamins and minerals not found in animal protein.

For the picky ones, some tricky ways to boost protein:

- Crack an egg into their smoothie or milkshake (2 years old and over).
- Use a ground nut or seed spread on their toast*.
- Make hummus or tzatziki and serve with grissini for dipping.
- Homemade custard.
- Tofu (silken) into scrambled eggs, milkshakes, smoothies or custard.
- Finely chopped alfalfa sprouts in a sandwich or salad.
- 'Crunchy sticks': Mung beans with the top and tail off.

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