

[CHAPTER 4]
Select The
Healthy Proteins



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The right proteins are a powerful ally in your pursuit of optimal wellness and vitality. When it comes to dietary protein and eating right for life, there are two primary rules you need to follow. First, you need to select the right form of protein. Second, you should always include some form of healthy protein at each meal.

Just like fats and carbs, some proteins are better for you than others. The healthiest proteins contain health-promoting nutrients like omega-3 fats and phytochemicals, and are largely free of components like trans fats and saturated fats. Let's look at a few basic examples for clarification.

How A Healthy Protein Breaks Down

A six-ounce broiled Porterhouse steak is a great source of protein—38 grams worth. But it also delivers 44 grams of fat, 16 of which are saturated—that's almost three-fourths of the FDA recommended daily intake for saturated fat! Now let's take a look at a healthy protein. The same portion of salmon provides 34 grams of protein, four grams of saturated fat and 18 grams of good fat. Another healthy protein includes lentils. A cup of cooked lentils has 34 grams of protein, delivers less than one gram of fat and is loaded with fiber, vitamins, minerals and disease-fighting phytochemicals.

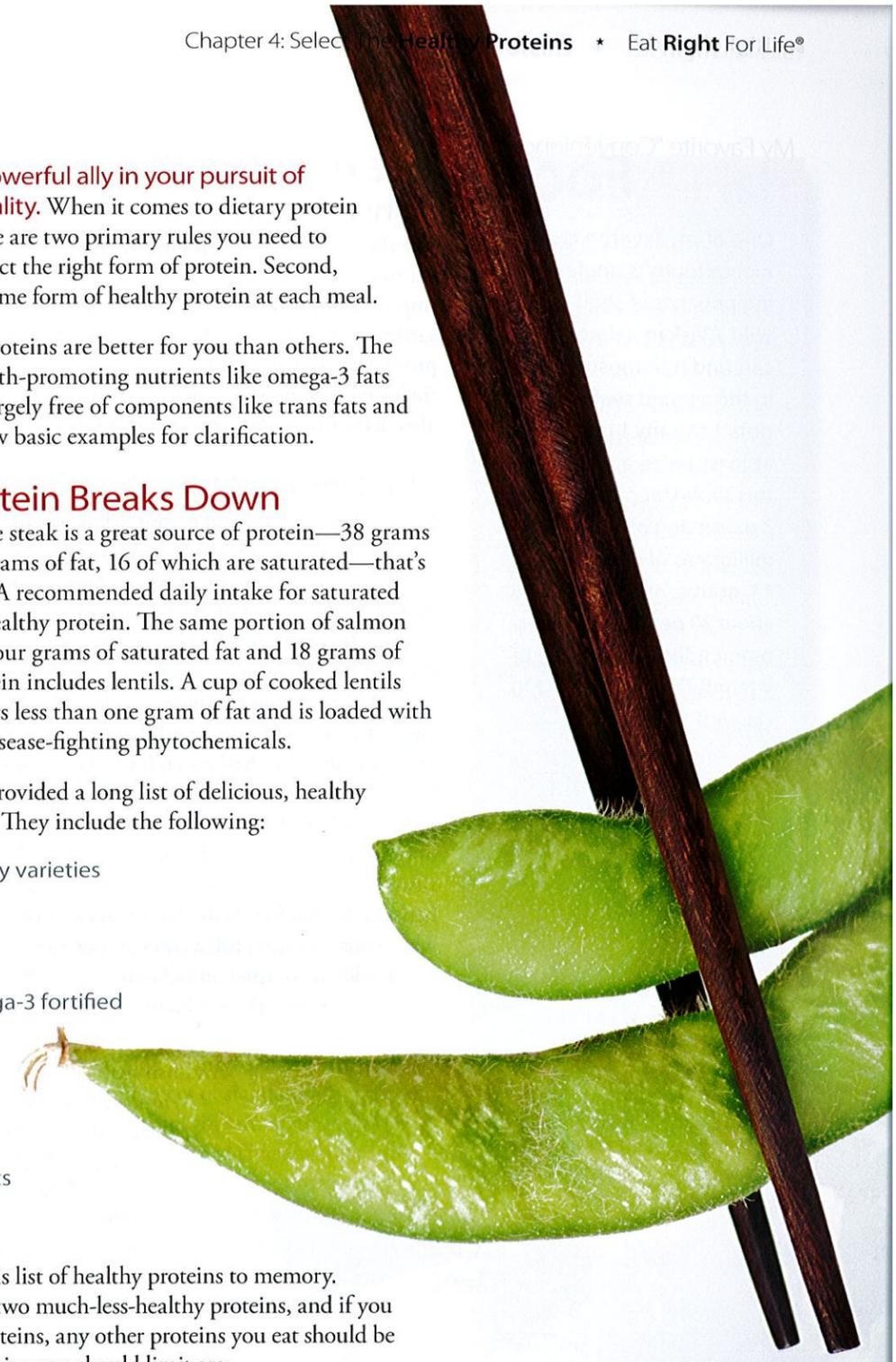
Indeed, nature has graciously provided a long list of delicious, healthy proteins from which to choose. They include the following:

- Fish, especially the oily varieties
- Shellfish
- Poultry
- Eggs, especially omega-3 fortified
- Nuts and seeds
- Beans
- Wild game
- Low-fat dairy products
- Whole soy foods

You don't have to commit this list of healthy proteins to memory. Just know that there are two much-less-healthy proteins, and if you restrict these two proteins, any other proteins you eat should be fine. The two proteins you should limit are:

1. Red meat, especially fatty cuts and processed varieties
2. Full-fat dairy products

We will switch things up a bit in this section, and discuss the healthy proteins first.



My Favorite "Convenience"
Food

One of my favorite convenience foods is single-serving pouches of shelf-stable wild Alaskan salmon. You can find it at most grocers in the canned seafood section. I top my lunch salad at least twice a week with this superstar protein. Each 3 oz. serving provides 1,000 milligrams of omega-3 fats, 13 grams of protein and about 70 percent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin D—all for just 120 calories!



THE HEALTHY PROTEINS

Fish: A Good Catch

The data is simply overwhelming that fish is good for us. Populations that eat more fish have fewer cases of heart disease, cancer, depression, arthritis, impotence and Alzheimer's. Fish, especially the oily varieties like salmon and sardines, are one of the healthiest proteins on earth. They provide complete protein (all of the essential amino acids) along with several key nutrients, including magnesium, selenium, potassium, vitamin D and B vitamins. Fish also deliver heart-healthy omega-3 fats.

The Double Duty Benefits Of Fish

Studies have shown that eating fish is one of the most powerful things you can do to guard your heart and brain. A fascinating report in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that the fish in traditional Japanese diets is likely the secret weapon for their "puzzlingly low" rates of heart disease. Investigators measured the amount of calcium (a marker for heart disease) in the coronary arteries of 869 Japanese and U.S. middle-aged men. Although the Japanese men had much higher rates of smoking and equivalent rates of other cardiovascular risk factors, like high blood pressure and diabetes, they had much lower rates (about three times less) of calcium build-up in their arteries compared to the U.S. males. The one distinctive difference between the two groups: the Japanese men had twice the amount of omega-3 fats in their blood. Of course, these findings aren't too surprising since we know that omega-3 fats provide seven separate cardiovascular benefits. In another study that included more than 43,000 adult males, those who reported eating fish as little as one to three times a month were 43 percent less likely to suffer an ischemic stroke (the most common type of stroke) versus those who never ate fish.

And fish really is brain food. A report in the journal *Neurology* found that older adults who regularly included fish in their diets had healthier brain structure. In this study, 3,660 elderly subjects were followed over a five-year period. Those who ate baked or broiled fish at least three times a week were 25 percent less likely to have areas of subtle brain damage (brain infarcts). Brain infarcts are powerful predictors of strokes and dementia.

The omega-3 fats in fish help ensure that your brain gets the steady and robust blood flow it requires by keeping arteries healthy and well-functioning. Omega-3s in fish also provide the brain with the fatty acid, DHA. DHA, better known as the smart fat, has shown promise in warding

off dementia and cognitive decline. A study that included more than 15,000 elderly subjects from seven different countries found that those who enjoyed fish most or all days of the week were 38 percent less likely to develop dementia versus those who rarely ate fish.

Go Fish!

Fish is ultimately one of the most nutritious, highest quality sources of protein available, and I encourage you to make it a regular part of your diet. You should strive for at least two servings of fish in your diet each week. The oily varieties offer a hearty supply of long-chained omega-3 fats, DHA and EPA, and are your best options. Breaded, deep-fried fish and fish sticks do not count, so stick to baked, broiled, poached and pan-seared.

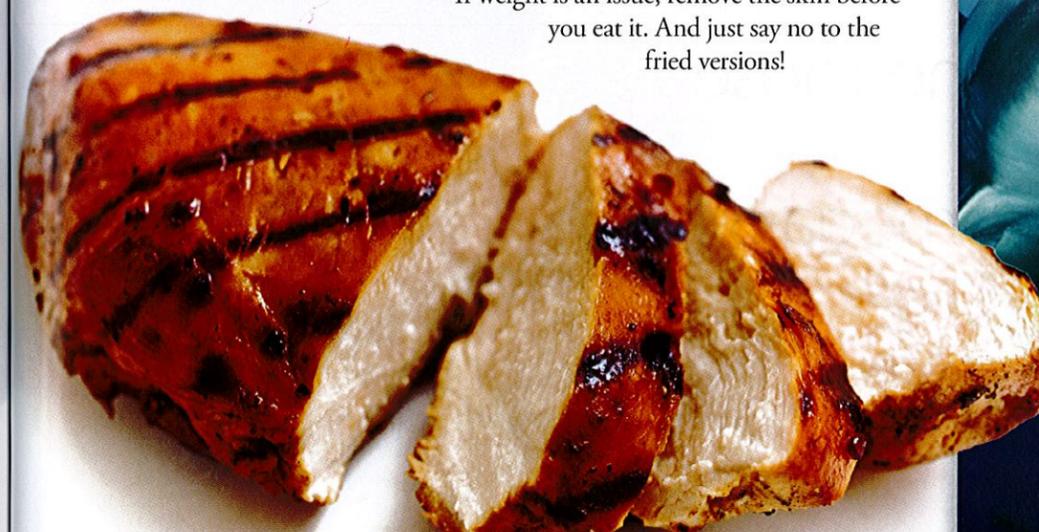
Other Proteins In The Sea: Shellfish

Shrimp, clams, oysters, scallops and lobster offer a delectable and super-healthy alternative to red meat and are low in calories and bad fats. Shellfish are brimming with nourishment including B vitamins, vitamin D, and those awesome omega-3 fats. They are rich in an array of important minerals and provide more zinc than any other food. Contrary to popular belief, shellfish do not have adverse effects on overall cholesterol levels and have been shown to actually benefit cardiovascular health, especially when eaten in lieu of fatty red meats.

Poultry: Protein With A Punch

In a striking contrast to red meat, chicken and turkey have never been directly associated with chronic diseases and provide an abundance of nutritional goodness. When you get your protein from poultry, you also get a nice dose of several B vitamins, iron, selenium and zinc. Further, as opposed to red meats, the flesh of poultry comes largely devoid of artery-clogging saturated fats. Three ounces of skinless turkey or chicken breast provide 26 grams of protein and less than one gram of saturated fat; while three ounces of standard ground beef provide 20 grams of protein and four and a half grams of saturated fat. For best results, choose baked, broiled or roasted chicken and turkey.

If weight is an issue, remove the skin before you eat it. And just say no to the fried versions!



Avoid The
"Dirty" Fish

Certain types of fish are high in environmental toxins like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins and methyl mercury, and should be avoided. These include the larger, longer-living carnivorous species, such as shark, marlin, king mackerel, tile fish and sword fish. Fresh tuna and canned white Albacore tuna can be moderately high in methyl mercury. I recommend you limit these forms of tuna to two servings per month. School-age children as well as women who are pregnant, nursing or may become pregnant are uniquely vulnerable to these toxins and should avoid fresh and canned white Albacore tuna altogether. Canned chunk lite tuna has less mercury and is acceptable in moderation.



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"Enjoy the other chicken of the sea!"

Soy Nuts: Good And Good For You

If you are one of the 74 million Americans who have high blood pressure, soy nuts may be a particularly good snack selection. A fascinating clinical trial found that a half-cup of roasted soy nuts consumed over the course of the day lowered blood pressure to the same degree as standard blood pressure medications. Eating soy nuts was also effective in reducing the blood pressure of people with pre-hypertension, defined as blood pressure between 120/80—139/89. Maintaining normal blood pressure—ideally 115/75 or less—is paramount to staying healthy. Even the lowest levels of pre-hypertension (120/80) can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease two and a half fold!

Roasted soy nuts are delicious, inexpensive and highly nutritious. You can find them in most standard grocers—try them!

Soy: Scoop it Up

There is perhaps no other group of foods that have received more spin than soy, and it seems to have generated a lot of confusion. Whole soy foods fit beautifully into the mix of healthy proteins. Here are the soy food facts based on the latest science:

1. Whole soy foods have an exemplary nutritional profile—they are very nutritious foods.
 - Soy foods provide high quality complete vegetable-based protein that is naturally low in saturated fat and cholesterol-free.
 - Soy foods are rich in essential nutrients including B vitamins, vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium and selenium.
 - Soy foods are high in soluble fiber—the fiber that reduces cholesterol and stabilizes blood sugar.
 - Soy foods provide heart-healthy fats, including the superstar omega-3 fats.
 - Soy foods provide an abundance of disease-fighting phytochemicals including isoflavones, saponins, phytosterols and protease inhibitors.
2. When consumed regularly (especially when they replace foods high in saturated fats like red meat) whole soy foods have been shown to modestly lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.
3. Regular consumption of soy foods has been associated with lower rates of cancer including breast, colon, prostate, lung and endometrial cancer. Regular consumption of whole soy foods has been associated with protection from osteoporosis and a reduction in fracture risk.
4. Regular consumption of soy foods may diminish menopausal symptoms in women.

Bottom line: everyone can benefit from the stellar package of nutrients whole soy foods provide. Whole soy foods include edamame, tofu, tempeh, soy milk, miso, roasted soy nuts and soy flour. I recommend you include the ones you like as part of your well-balanced diet. In my experience, most everyone (including kids) find edamame (fresh green soybeans) and roasted soy nuts delicious. Tempeh and tofu are bland and tasteless on their own, but can readily adapt to the flavor of whatever you add to them—teriyaki, barbecue, vinegar, etc. My personal favorite is tempeh—a fermented form of soy that has a firm, cheese-like texture. I flavor it with a little extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper and add it to salads and wraps. Regardless of the soy foods you choose, I recommend organic, non-GMO varieties. Additionally, you should avoid soy supplements and soy pills, as their safety has not been established.

Eggs: Break Them Out Of Their Shells

Eggs have always been a delicious and convenient source of high-quality, low-fat protein and, thanks to modern food technology, eggs are healthier than ever these days. Along with B vitamins, vitamin E, and iron, you can even get omega-3 fats in your eggs. Many egg producers are fortifying their chicken feed with omega-3 fats, which means that this superstar fat gets incorporated into the egg yolk. These omega-3 eggs are available at most grocery stores. You will pay a bit more, but it's well worth it, as these eggs are second only to seafood as the most plentiful food source of DHA. Simply look for "DHA" or "omega-3" on the label. Eggland's Best is a popular national brand that has also been voted America's "best-tasting" egg by the American Culinary Institute.

Eggs are healthiest if prepared boiled or poached. I always keep a carton of boiled eggs at home in my refrigerator for a great, grab-and-go protein source.

Wild Game: Hunt These Proteins Down

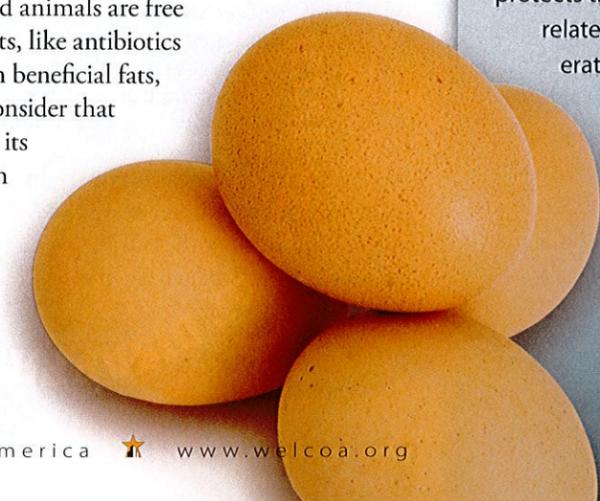
If you have access to it, wild game definitely has its rightful place in a healthy diet. After all, our hunter-gatherer ancestors who by most accounts did not develop chronic diseases consumed it regularly. Deer, antelope, moose, duck, goose, pheasant, turkey, quail and dove are excellent sources of high-quality, lean protein. Due to their natural diets and wild habitats, the nutritional profiles of wild game are very different from their domesticated counterparts. Wild game has fewer calories, less total fat and less saturated fat than their factory-farmed versions. Wild animals are free of potentially harmful added ingredients, like antibiotics and hormones, and they are plentiful in beneficial fats, including omega-3s. For perspective, consider that a wild cape buffalo living and eating in its natural environment provides one-tenth the total fat, half the saturated fat and up to six times more omega-3 fats than a grain-fed, domesticated modern day steer.

All About Eggs And Cholesterol

Please know that there is no scientific evidence that eggs elevate the risk of cardiovascular disease in healthy subjects. However, there is some evidence that eggs can elevate cholesterol levels and increase cardiovascular risk in people who already have high cholesterol levels and/or are diabetic. I recommend that diabetics and those with cardiovascular risk factors limit eggs to less than five a week.

See The Benefits Of Eggs

One of eggs' most important yet barely recognized health benefits relates to preservation of eyesight. Egg yolks provide the most bio-available form of lutein. Lutein is a carotenoid phytochemical that shields the eyes from the damaging effects of sunlight. Eggs provide about three times higher blood levels of lutein than most other food sources, which ultimately protects the eyes from age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.



High On Hemp

I am frequently asked what protein powder I recommend, and finally I have discovered one that I know is truly “healthy” and that I can wholeheartedly endorse—hemp seed powder. It is made from ground hemp seeds so it is a “whole food” protein versus the “isolated” protein in whey, casein, or soy-based protein powders. Hemp seeds provide high quality “complete” protein that is gentler on your bones, your digestive system, and the environment. Additionally, hemp seeds are one of the most nutritionally complete foods on the planet. Aside from a whopping dose of protein and fiber, ground hemp seeds provide all the essential fatty acids, including a big hit of omega-3 along with B vitamins, vitamins D and E, and a comprehensive package of minerals. The “all natural” nutritional firepower in hemp seed powder puts the others to shame. Unlike marijuana leaves—hemp seeds do not contain any THC. You can find it in healthy grocery stores. Be sure to select 100% ground hemp seeds or hemp kernels—you want the full package of nutritional excellence the seeds provide.

Protein Is Nature’s Diet Pill

Of the three basic building blocks of nutrition—protein, carbohydrates and fat—nothing provides longer-lasting and more effective appetite control than protein. In fact, I like to call protein nature’s diet pill!

There are many reasons why protein helps stave off hunger. When proteins are digested, they produce a prolonged and steady level of glucose in the bloodstream. This keeps your brain’s appetite center in the “off” position longer than if you were to eat a carbohydrate or fat-laden meal. Foods that are rich in protein also slow the overall digestive process by delaying gastric emptying. This means that foods will stay in your stomach longer, enhancing the feeling of fullness and satiety. Lastly, protein is more effective than carbs and fats when it comes to decreasing levels of the powerful hunger-generating hormone, ghrelin. Ghrelin is produced by cells that line your stomach and it’s your body’s appetite-stimulating hormone. The lower your ghrelin level, the less hungry you will feel.

Take full advantage of protein’s appetite-suppressive effects by getting enough of it at each meal. Here are some tips that will help you in that effort:

- Include a nice dose (15 grams or more) of protein at each meal.
 - The right dose should give you at least two hours of satiety (appetite suppression).
 - If you are hungry less than two hours after a meal, you need to increase your protein a bit.
 - The best protein choices for your health and your waistline include fish, shellfish, skinless poultry, nuts, seeds, whole soy foods, low-fat or skim dairy products, omega-3 eggs, and beans and legumes.
- Make sure you get adequate protein at breakfast.
 - Getting adequate protein at breakfast appears to be particularly valuable for appetite control.
 - To get the healthiest, leanest sources of protein at breakfast, try a veggie omelet topped with skim or reduced fat cheese; a fruit smoothie with a couple of scoops of ground hemp seeds; a whole wheat bagel topped with some peanut butter or smoked salmon; a bowl of high protein cereal and skim or soy milk topped with a handful of nuts; some low-fat cottage cheese or plain Greek-style yogurt with fresh fruit; or a whole grain breakfast burrito with eggs, beans and salsa.

No doubt about it—eating the right proteins can help us feel energized and full, all without the extra calories and fat. So ditch the diet pills and get the real!



THE NOT SO HEALTHY PROTEINS Red Meat

I actually love red meat, but because it has such a bad rap, I include it in my diet sparingly. Red meat, which includes beef, pork and lamb can include a host of harmful substances, including excessive amounts of heme-iron, carcinogens, arachidonic acid, oxysterols, excess omega-6 fats, antibiotic residues, environmental toxins (pesticides, PCBs, dioxins) and hormone residues like IGF-1.

The scientific research linking diets heavy in red meat and increased disease risk is rich and voluminous. Having reviewed thousands of diet and nutrition studies over the past decade, I cannot recall a single one that reported any disease protection from eating red meat. On the contrary, my files are filled with reports that show a consistent and clear relationship between consuming red meat and a multitude of health problems, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and many forms of cancer. Here is a snapshot of some of the most compelling studies to date:

- The largest study ever conducted to establish the health effects of eating red meat found that those consuming the most red meat—about a quarter-pound hamburger or a pork chop a day—were more likely to develop a number of different cancers, including colorectal, esophageal, liver, lung, pancreatic and advanced prostate cancer. This eight-year evaluation included over 500,000 adults from 10 different European countries.
- In a study involving 284 middle-aged women, those who consumed the most red meat were more likely to be obese. Of those consuming three or more servings a day, about 53 percent were obese. Of those consuming less than two servings a day, only 15 percent were obese.



Protein Put To The Test

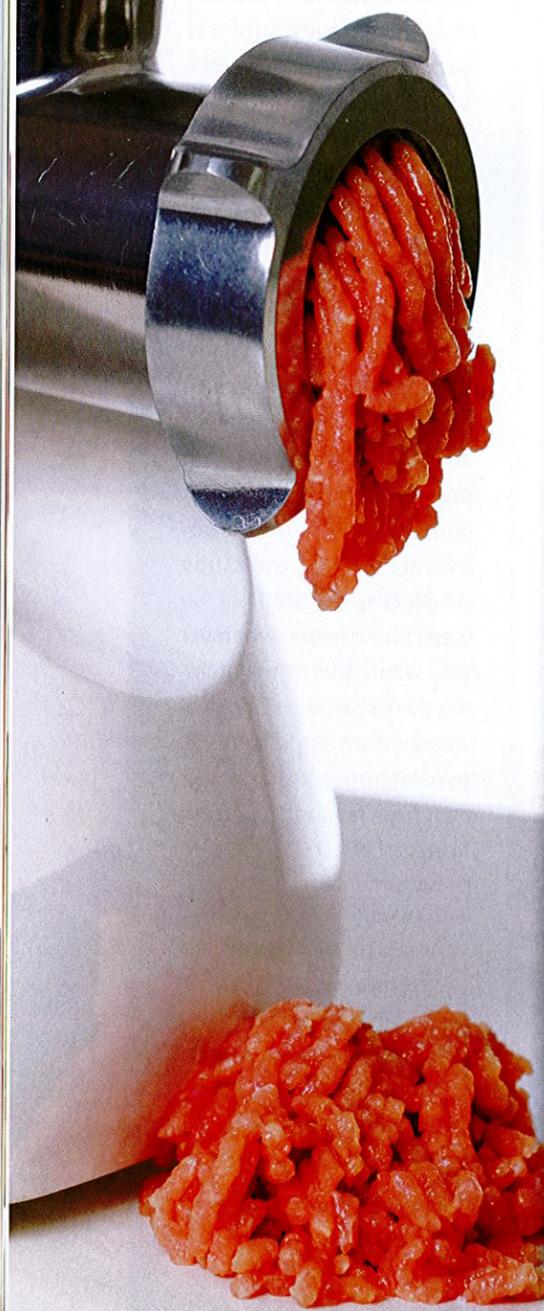
To test the power of protein, researchers at the University of Washington School of Medicine placed 19 study subjects on different diets, each with a varying protein content. In the first phase, the study subjects were placed on a two-week weight-maintenance diet. On that diet, 15 percent of their calories came from protein, 35 percent came from fat, and 50 percent came from carbohydrates. In phase two, they were transitioned to a two-week diet consisting of the same number of calories, but with more protein and less fat (30 percent from protein, 20 percent from fat and 50 percent from carbohydrates). Then the study subjects spent the final 12-week phase eating whatever they wanted, while maintaining the same percentages of calories from foods (again, 30 percent from protein, 20 percent from fat and 50 percent from carbs).

The results? Study subjects reported a markedly decreased appetite while on the higher protein phase two diet. During phase three, despite the fact that they could eat whatever they wanted, study subjects ate 450 less calories and lost 11 pounds on average.

My Beef With Red Meat

I include red meat in my diet, but I make a concerted effort to limit it to two servings or less a week. Here are seven great reasons to follow my lead and curtail your intake of red meat.

- 1 Red meat, especially fatty cuts, contains lots of saturated fat.** Eating excessive saturated fat can increase your risk of heart disease and promote insulin resistance.
- 2 Red meat is a rich food source of arachidonic acid.** Arachidonic acid is an infamous, pro-inflammatory fatty acid. As I've mentioned, inflammation plays a prominent role in the development of cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, allergies, asthma, autoimmune conditions and some forms of cancer. Additionally, a landmark study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that six percent of Americans carry a gene variant that dramatically increases their risk of heart disease, especially when foods high in arachidonic acid (red meat) are consumed.
- 3 Red meat from domesticated animals contains lots of omega-6 fatty acids and minimal to no omega-3 fatty acids.** Omega-6 fatty acids compete in the body with omega-3 fatty acids. All domesticated livestock, with the exception of those that are free range, are fed artificial diets heavy in omega-6 fats. Excessive consumption of red meat contributes to an unhealthy omega-6, omega-3 fatty acid ratio.
- 4 Heavy red meat consumption has been associated with several forms of cancer.** A potent class of known carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) called heterocyclic amines form within the protein fibers of red meat when heated at high temperatures (grilling, barbecuing and frying). A second class of carcinogens, nitrosamines, can form in the gastrointestinal tract from sodium nitrite contained in processed and cured meats (bacon, ham, salami, bologna, hot dogs, and other processed luncheon meats).
- 5 Red meat (especially beef) contains high concentrations of iron.** Iron from red meat, unlike vegetable sources of iron, is absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract whether the body needs it or not. Excessive iron in the bloodstream behaves as a potent pro-oxidant and has been implicated in promoting heart disease, breast cancer, colon cancer and type 2 diabetes.
- 6 Red meat contains potentially harmful added ingredients.** Virtually all domesticated livestock (with the exception of those deemed organic or free range) contain antibiotic and sex steroid hormonal residues. Excessive exposure to these chemicals may predispose humans to resistant bacterial pathogens as well as hormonally sensitive cancers, like breast, prostate and ovarian. Moreover, eating red meat increases your exposure to harmful agents such as pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals, PCBs and dioxins.
- 7 Red meat may contain harmful viruses and bacteria.** Undercooked red meat can lead to potentially life-threatening infections.



- After following the diets of over half a million adults over the course of 10 years, men and women consuming the most red meat had a 31 and 36 percent, respectively, higher risk of dying from all causes compared to those consuming the least. In this evaluation, the risk of cardiovascular disease was 27 percent higher for men and 50 percent higher for women eating the most red meat.
- Processed red meat appears to be particularly risky, especially for colon cancer. A large review of 24 studies found that for every one-ounce increase of processed red meat (bacon, sausage, ham, etc.) consumed daily, the risk of colon cancer increased by almost 49 percent.
- In a prospective study involving over 37,000 women followed for more than eight years, those who ate the most red meat were 28 percent more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than study subjects who consumed the least. In this evaluation, bacon and hot dogs were the most risky of all types of red meat.

I recommend that you limit red meat, which includes beef, pork and lamb, to two servings or less a week. When you have it, go for the leanest cuts, like tenderloin and sirloin. Be especially vigilant in restricting processed varieties like bacon, bologna and sausage.



Beware Of Oxysterol

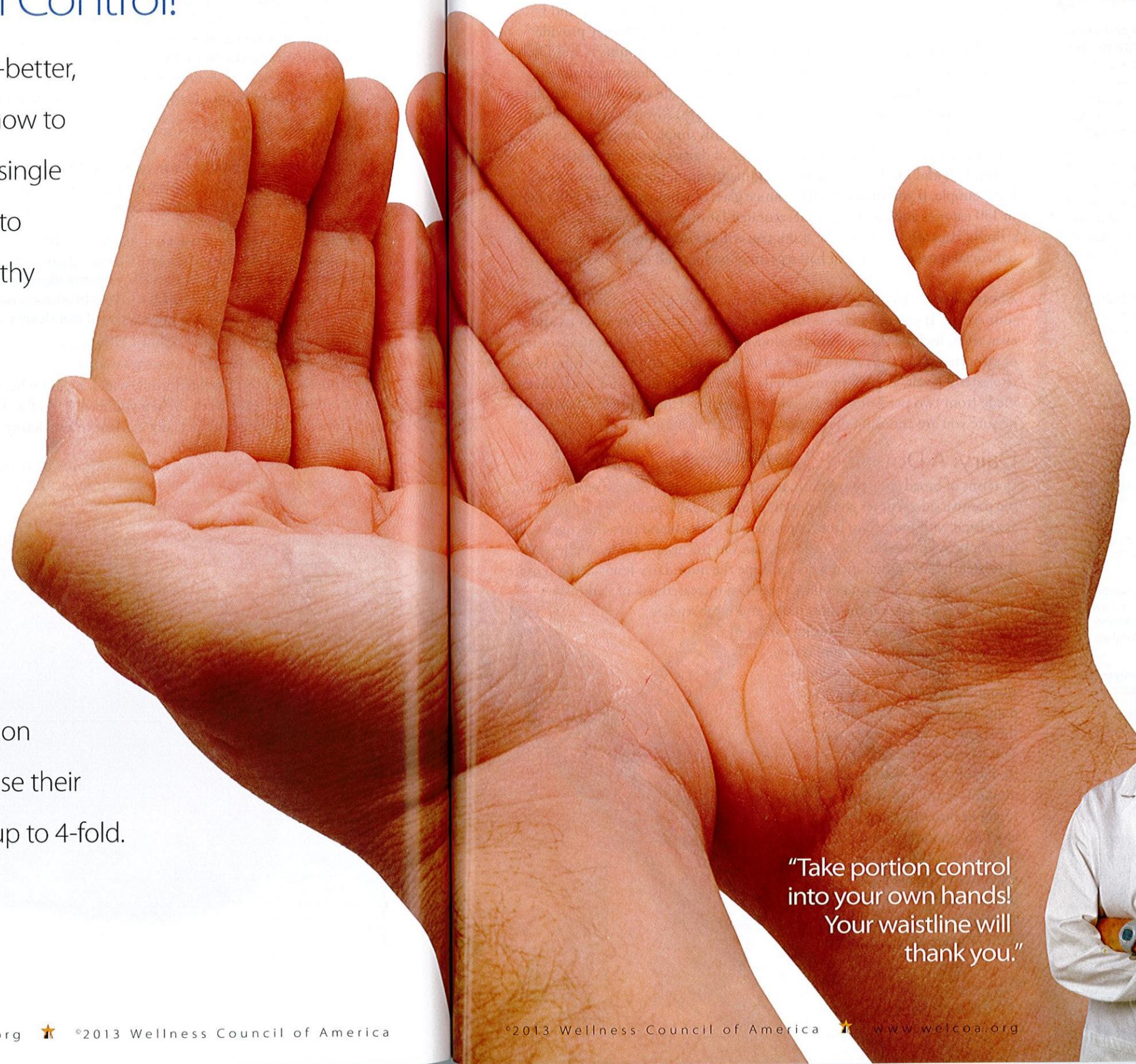
Scientists from the Chinese University of Hong Kong have uncovered perhaps the most compelling reason to eliminate fried foods from your diet: oxysterol. Also known as oxidized cholesterol, oxysterol is like regular cholesterol on steroids when it comes to clogging your arteries. When subjected to high heat, as in frying, grilling or broiling, cholesterol reacts with oxygen, giving rise to highly reactive oxysterol particles. To study how these renegade fat particles impact the health and function of arteries, scientists fed three groups of lab mice identical diets with one containing .05 percent regular cholesterol, a second .05 percent oxysterol and a third .1 percent oxysterol. The two groups consuming the oxysterol were hit with a litany of adverse vascular effects, including a much greater rise in cholesterol and triglyceride levels, more plaque buildup and a marked disruption in the function of the endothelial cells (cells that line arteries and control blood flow). That is a scary, quadruple insult to the "rivers of life" and some major competition for the current, artery-clogging world champion, trans fat.

Stay heart smart and keep oxysterol out of your body. You can do so by restricting your intake of red meats that have been fried, grilled or broiled. Keep in mind that you will never have to be concerned with this sinister substance when eating plant foods, because plants are naturally 100% cholesterol free!

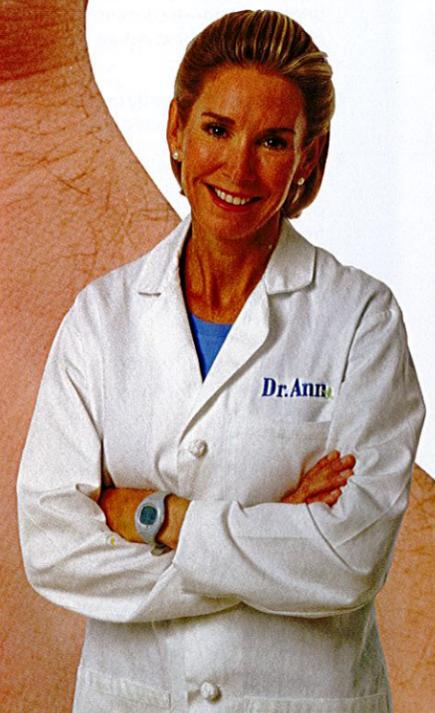
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A Lesson In Portion Control!

Given our overwhelming, bigger-is-better, super-sized food culture, learning how to control your portions is one of the single most powerful strategies available to you to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. My best advice for keeping your portions on target is right in your own two hands! At meals, limit what you eat to what fits in your two hands cupped together minus any fruit and veggies (no need to limit portions of fruits or veggies). Those who engage in regular portion control have been shown to increase their chances of long-term weight loss up to 4-fold.



"Take portion control into your own hands! Your waistline will thank you."



Healthy Summer Grilling

Grilling is fun, easy and tasty, but may be hazardous to your health. Grilled meat, especially red meat, is a well known source of two cancer-causing agents: heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). HCAs develop when the muscle proteins of meats are exposed to high heat. PAHs form in the black, charred outer portions of grilled meats when their surface fats and juices come into direct contact with flame and smoke.

If you are going to grill any type of meat, you can significantly reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals by taking the following simple steps:

- Partially pre-cook your meat in the microwave for two minutes.
- Marinate before grilling. Even a quick 30 second submersion in a marinade liquid is helpful.
- Mix some textured vegetable protein into your ground meat at a 1:9 ratio.
- Avoid well-done meats and trim away any charred portions before eating.
- Add a tablespoon or two of dried rosemary to your meat prior to grilling—it contains phytochemicals that reduce the formation of HCAs.
- Flip the meat frequently to keep the internal temperature lower.
- Stick with lean cuts and trim away as much visible fat as possible to decrease flare ups from the open flame.
- Grill meats as an occasional treat and consume moderate portions when you do.

Lastly, enjoy your grilled meat with as many brightly colored fruit and vegetable sides as possible. They provide healthful compounds that can counteract the harmful effects of PAHs and HCAs

Full-Fat Dairy Products

Whole or full-fat dairy products are the second unhealthy protein, and I strongly recommend that you restrict these foods. Although they provide complete protein and several important nutrients, like vitamins A and D and calcium, they also provide an enormous dose of artery-clogging saturated fat and loads of calories. Whole dairy products include whole milk, regular (full-fat) cheeses, cream, ice cream, and sour cream. Always choose low-fat, reduced-fat, or skim varieties of dairy. With this simple tactic, you can reduce calories and fat and still take full advantage of dairy's complete protein, vitamins A and D, B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and zinc. For example, if you drink an eight-ounce glass of whole milk, you will take in 150 calories and eight grams of saturated fat (the same amount as four strips of bacon!). If you choose skim, you will get even higher levels of milk's beneficial nutrients with just half a gram of bad fat and only 80 calories.

Always choose skim or one percent milk, low-fat yogurt, and reduced-fat sour cream. If you are a cheese lover, stick to the reduced-fat versions and even then, include them in moderation. Cheese is the single greatest source of saturated fat in the American diet and the leading culprit in raising blood cholesterol levels. Part-skim mozzarella sticks and cheddar and Swiss cheese made from two percent milk are widely available. Check labels carefully to be sure you are choosing these reduced-fat cheese options.

Dairy: A Double-Edged Sword

In terms of broad spectrum health, dairy products produce a mixed bag. On the positive side, regular consumption of low-fat dairy products has been associated with protection from osteoporosis, better blood pressure control, less metabolic syndrome and less colon cancer. On the negative side, studies have consistently shown that men who consume the most dairy foods develop more prostate cancer. A few studies have shown an increased risk of Parkinson's disease in men who eat the most dairy, and some studies have shown higher rates of ovarian cancer in women who consume the most dairy.

A final consideration is digestibility. About 70 percent of the world's population cannot fully digest the sugar in milk called lactose. This lactose intolerance can lead to bloating, abdominal discomfort and excess gas. If you fit into this category like I do, choose Lactaid or calcium-fortified plain soy milk. Fermented dairy products like yogurt and kefir are often better tolerated in those who are lactose intolerant.

“Although they [full fat dairy products] provide complete protein and several important nutrients, like vitamins A and D and calcium, they also provide an enormous dose of artery-clogging saturated fat and loads of calories.”



Vegetable-Based Proteins:
Make The Swap

In a study involving over 29,000 post-menopausal women followed for about 15 years, those consuming the largest amount of protein from red meat and dairy had up to a 40 percent greater risk of death from heart disease versus those with the lowest intakes. Interestingly, women in this study who consumed the most vegetable-based proteins like beans and soy foods had a 30 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease than those eating the least.

Vegetable-based proteins have several distinct advantages over animal-based proteins. Replace them for animal-based proteins when you can. The best sources of vegetable proteins include:

- **Beans and legumes:** There are over 24 varieties to choose from, including black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, field peas, lentils and butter beans, etc.
- **Nuts:** Almonds, pecans, walnuts, cashews, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, pine nuts and pistachios.
- **Seeds:** Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, flax seeds, chia seeds, sesame seeds and hemp seeds.
- **Whole soy foods:** Soy milk, tofu, tempeh, roasted soy nuts and edamame.

By making this swap, you can enjoy your protein along with:

1. A much smaller carbon footprint
2. Phytochemicals
3. Zero cholesterol
4. Negligible to zero saturated fats
5. Beneficial fiber
6. A higher nutrient density
7. Less calories

Plain Yogurt: The Cream Of The Dairy Crop

As dairy foods go, low-fat plain yogurt is a superstar standout. I want you to include it in your diet regularly. Here are three big reasons why you should.

1. **Yogurt is the richest and most bio-available source of calcium.** An eight-ounce serving provides 30 to 40 percent of your daily calcium requirements. In addition to calcium, yogurt will also give you B vitamins, zinc and potassium.
2. **Yogurt contains probiotics.** Probiotics are the beneficial bacteria that reside in our colons and appear to be rapidly rising stars on the disease-fighting front. We have long known about the importance of probiotics in digestive function, but we now know that they offer additional health benefits. Probiotics have been shown to be helpful for many conditions, including inflammatory bowel disease, colic, eczema, allergies and upper respiratory infections. Mounting evidence suggests they may also aid in weight management.
3. **Yogurt is easily digested and its nutrients are better absorbed.** The good bacteria in yogurt have predigested its lactose, which means that even lactose intolerant individuals can enjoy it. These same bacteria also produce lactic acid, which aids in the absorption of calcium and B vitamins.

Ounce for ounce, low-fat plain yogurt will give you the most nutritional bang for your efforts. It has about half the calories of fruit-flavored yogurts, twice as much protein, more calcium, less fillers and no added sugar. Greek-style yogurt is now available at most grocery outlets (Oikos, FAGE) and takes health and taste to a whole new level. This special yogurt is strained to remove its liquid component, giving it a rich and creamy texture that is truly decadent. This straining process also doubles its protein and lowers its sugar (lactose) content. Here are some easy ways to bring plain yogurt into your dietary repertoire:

- Use it in place of milk in your cereal
- Make a yogurt parfait by alternating it with layers of your favorite fresh fruit
- Use it in your dips to replace mayo or sour cream
- Add it to your salad dressings for extra creaminess
- Use it in your sauces to replace butter or heavy cream
- Enjoy some all on its own as a mid-afternoon snack

If you prefer your yogurt a bit sweetened like I do, add some fresh fruit or a small portion of honey or maple syrup. And again, you should avoid fruit flavored yogurts—many contain more sugar than a standard dessert!

Learning to do your protein right is perhaps the easiest of all the *Eat Right For Life*® strategies. Here is a recap of what you need to do for success.

PLAN OF ACTION

Select the **right** proteins.

1. ALWAYS CONSUME THE HEALTHY PROTEINS

- Fish, shellfish, poultry (skinless if overweight), beans and legumes, nuts, seeds, whole soy foods, wild game, omega-3-fortified eggs and low-fat/skim dairy products are the best choices.
- Strive for three servings of fish a week. Oily fish are best (salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines, herring and lake trout). Avoid shark, marlin, king mackerel, tile fish and swordfish due to toxins. Women of child-bearing years and children should also avoid fresh tuna and canned albacore tuna.
- Consume omega-3 eggs as desired, unless you have a cholesterol problem or type 2 diabetes. These two groups should limit eggs to less than five a week.
- For optimal appetite control, be sure to include healthy proteins at each meal, especially breakfast.

2. STRIVE TO EAT MORE VEGETABLE PROTEIN

- Vegetable-based proteins guard and protect your health in ways that animal-based proteins cannot.
- Beans and legumes, nuts, seeds, nut and seed butters, and whole soy foods are all excellent sources of vegetable-based proteins. It's especially beneficial to replace the unhealthy animal proteins—beef, pork, lamb and whole dairy products—with these foods.

3. LIMIT THE UNHEALTHY PROTEINS

- Limit red meat, which includes beef, pork and lamb, to two or less servings a week. Choose lean cuts when you do eat these foods. Be especially vigilant in avoiding fatty cuts and processed red meats like bacon, sausage and bologna.
- Limit or eliminate whole dairy products (whole milk, full-fat cheeses, ice cream, cream and sour cream). Opt for the low-fat versions instead.

