Meat and Bean Group: Go Lean with Protein

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MEAT AND BEAN GROUP  
Go Lean with Protein

We all need protein in our diet every day. Meat, poultry, and fish supply protein, as well as iron and other vitamins and minerals. Other foods that provide protein and many of the same vitamins and minerals are:

▲ Shellfish
▲ Wild game
▲ Dry peas and beans
▲ Eggs
▲ Nuts and seeds
▲ Peanut butter

These foods belong in the Meat and Bean Group, as well.

MyPyramid shows that fewer calories should be eaten from foods in the Meat and Bean Group than from foods in the Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, and Milk groups. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Dietary Guidelines recommend different amounts of food from the Meat and Bean Group for different people, depending on their need for calories. To find the best amount of food from the Meat and Bean Group to eat every day, visit <http://www.MyPyramid.gov> or complete MyPyramid Worksheet (NEP-201C).

Serving It Up
1-ounce equivalent of food from the Meat and Beans Group is:

▲ 1 ounce cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
▲ ¼ cup cooked dry beans or peas
▲ ½ ounce nuts or seeds
▲ 1 egg
▲ 1 tablespoon peanut butter

• About 1 ounce of nuts will fit in a cupped hand.
• A palm is about the same size as 3 ounces of meat.
• A deck of playing cards may also be used to estimate 3 ounces of meat.
Did You Know?
• Protein is used for body growth and repair of skin, hair, nails, and muscles. It also helps heal wounds and fight infection.
• Iron helps form red blood cells. It’s also important for getting oxygen to the body’s cells. The best sources of iron are organ meats such as liver, dry beans, and red meats such as pork and beef. Liver is high in cholesterol.

Stretching Your Dollar
Meat is one of the most costly food items. Most Americans eat more meat than they need. Extra calories from meat are burned for energy or stored as body fat. The following ideas can save money and still provide ample protein:

• Limit serving sizes to 2 to 3 ounces.
• Serve beans, peanut butter, or eggs instead of meat.
• Use leftovers in casseroles, soups, stews, salads, or sandwiches.
• Use meat bones and poultry wings and necks to make stock for soup. Add leftover meat, rice, or noodles and vegetables to make a hearty meal.
• Buy whole chickens and large cuts of meat and cut them into pieces for several meals. Freeze any meat that you can’t use within two days. Ground meats lose quality more quickly than larger cuts.
• Compare prices for meat by cost per serving rather than cost per pound. (Estimate servings for meat with bones versus meat without bones. Consider fat content of meat when estimating servings.)

Best Buys in Meat, Poultry, Fish, and Beans
▲ Dry beans, peas, lentils
▲ Ground beef or pork
▲ Eggs
▲ Whole turkey or chicken
▲ Peanut butter
▲ Cured ham with bone
▲ Frozen fish fillets
▲ Pork loin or shoulder
▲ Pork loin or shoulder roast with bone
▲ Canned tuna or mackerel
▲ Liver