

Can you get enough protein without meat?

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Featured topic and speaker

Whether you're vegetarian, reducing your meat intake, or simply looking for healthier ways to add more plant foods to your diet, this evidence-based guidance can help you make informed nutrition choices. Find out why protein is essential for building and maintaining muscle, supporting your organs and helping your body function at its best.

Shayla Nettey, MD, shares:

- How much protein you really need
- Top plant-based protein sources
- Chickpeas, tempeh, and other protein-packed foods
- Processed vs. whole-food plant-based options
- Tips for building balanced vegetarian meals

Want to start eating more plant-based protein? [Try this high protein Greek bean salad.](#)

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Speaker

- **Shayla Nettey, MD**, hospitalist, Moses Cone Health System; co-founder, Cooking on Purpose Health

Transcript

Dr. Nettey: If you're vegetarian, if you're not eating a lot of meat, what's the number one question people ask you? How am I going to get my protein? Am I going to get enough protein in my diet? The answer is absolutely, yes, you can. Hi, everyone. Dr. Nettey here.

The first thing I tell people if they're eating plant-based, protein is important because it helps your body feel good but also helps because it's a building block. So, it helps you with your muscle, helps you with different organs in your body.

I really can't stress enough how important it is for us to make sure we're starting our meals thinking about protein and then building from there. Now, traditionally, people think protein equals beef, chicken, fish. But I'm here to tell you, it doesn't have to just be that. Look at this beautiful chickpea salad. This actually packs a lot of protein in it, not just from the chickpeas, but even from the asparagus.

My personal favorite is this. This is actually plant-based sausage, but it's made with vital wheat gluten. It tastes amazing. But you don't have to have something like this. You can even use things like tempeh. It's fermented soybeans.

Listen, not everything that's plant-based is healthy. For instance, these two examples right here are technically both plant-based meat alternatives. But you do have to be mindful when you're eating food that's processed like this. Unfortunately, there's a ton of sodium in these foods.

When I cook something like this and I have people over and they smell it and they're like, oh, what's that? They eat it. And then I'm like, yeah, there's no meat in. They're like, what? Giving people something that tastes amazing and saying, hey, guess what? This is good for you.

Disclaimer: This video is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. If you have questions about your health and diet, please consult your doctor.