Protein is an essential part of a healthy diet. As the building blocks of body cells and tissues, proteins are important for healthy functioning, growth, and prevention of sickness and disease. Many foods contain protein including both animal and plant based foods.

Animal foods that contain protein include dairy, eggs, and meat. Choose animal sources of protein that are lower in saturated fat, such as lean ground beef, chicken breast, and fish. Low-fat dairy products are also good sources of protein, including skim or 1% milk.

Animal based foods such as lean red meats that are high in protein, are also usually high in iron. Iron is an important part of red blood cells, aiding the transportation of oxygen throughout the body. Iron is also important for repairing body tissue and for helping to keep the immune system strong.

Plant-based foods that contain protein are beans, nuts and seeds, and soy. Nut-butter like peanut butter and almond butter are other plant-based sources of protein.

Beans and peas are unique foods in the USDA MyPlate recommendations because they are considered a protein and a vegetable. Vegetarians may tend to count beans and peas as a protein, and those who regularly consume meat may tend to count beans and peas as vegetables. MyPlate guidance recommends that everyone should consume beans and peas because they contain important nutrients. They are high in fiber, which helps keep the digestive tract healthy and prevent constipation. Fiber may also help reduce blood cholesterol, which may lower risk for heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.

Most adults need 5-6 ½ ounces of protein foods every day. This is about the same as 2 small lean hamburgers, 2 cans of drained tuna, 5-6 hard-boiled eggs, 60 almonds, or 1 ¼ cup cooked beans. Five to 6 ½ ounces of protein food is the amount necessary for an adult who is moderately physically active for 30 minutes or more per day.


Written by Sasha Harrison, Post-Baccalaurate Dietetics and Nutrition, Fitness and Health Student
Food Safety:
Top 5 Kitchen Mistakes

Dr. Christine Bruhn, food safety expert and spokesperson for the Institute of Food Technologists, videotaped 120 people while they prepared a meal. Although the participants felt confident in their skills and knowledge, she found that they made several mistakes. The Top 5 Food Safety Kitchen Mistakes she found are described below. Her video can be found at http://bcove.me/s3docy4h.

**Mistake #1: Not Washing Hands**
Participants did not wash their hands before preparing the meal. Hands should be washed for 20 seconds with soap and water and dried with a paper towel before preparing a meal. Cloth towels should be avoided because they can increase the likelihood of spreading bacteria. The contaminated towel can spread bacteria to hands and surfaces when used.

**Mistake #2: Washing Chicken**
Washing raw chicken before preparing it can increase the spread of bacteria. Bacteria that are present on the outside of the raw chicken can splatter on the sink and reach surfaces up to two feet away. Raw chicken should not be washing before seasoning or cooking.

**Mistake #3: Not Using a Thermometer to Test the Temperature Inside of Cooked Meat**
When testing the doneness of meat, a thermometer should be used to ensure that the meat is fully cooked. Many participants used only their eyes to determine if the chicken was done. Dr. Bruhn noted that even though the juices of the chicken were clear, this did not mean that the chicken had reached the proper internal temperature.

**Mistake #4: Improper Refrigerator Temperature**
The temperature of a refrigerator should be 40 degrees Fahrenheit and the temperature of a freezer should be 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Fifteen percent of Dr. Bruhn’s participants had refrigerators that were 45 degrees Fahrenheit. One refrigerator was as high as 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures above 40 degrees Fahrenheit in the refrigerator can decrease the time food will stay safe. A thermometer should be kept inside each refrigerator and freezer to allow the temperature to be monitored.

**Mistake #5: Rewashing Bagged, Pre-Washed Greens**
Bagged, pre-washed greens should not be washed again at home. The greens are ready to be consumed directly from the bag. Washing bagged, pre-washed greens again at home can introduce bacteria that would not have otherwise been present.

Sources: http://www.ift.org/Knowledge-Center/Learn-About-Food-Science/Food-Facts/Kitchen-Mistakes.aspx
Finding time to cook healthy family meals can be a challenge. There are many tips and tricks that can help to cut food preparation time. The time saved on cooking meals can be spent with family and make it easier to prepare family meals more often.

**Save Time with Slow Cooking**
Slow cookers can save the time spent cooking meals. Cook meals throughout the day to have a meal ready for supper. Just be careful that the slow cooker is set on a low setting to prevent the risk of fire.

**Save Time with Leftovers**
Making more than one serving of a meal can save time later. The meal will already be cooked and can be reheated in the microwave or on the stove. Make sure to date the leftovers and reheat them to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Cheesy Salmon Pasta**

**Ingredients** (6 servings)
- 1 (12 ounce) package uncooked whole wheat spaghetti
- 1.5 Tablespoons olive oil*
- 1 cup sweet onions, chopped*
- 2 Tablespoons prepared basil pesto**
- 2 (6 ounce) cans salmon, drained and flaked
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

**Directions**
1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8-10 minutes or until slightly firm to the bite; drain.
3. Toss cooked pasta, salmon, and cheese together and serve.

**Salmon Patties**

**Ingredients** (9 servings)
- 1 can salmon (15.5 ounce, drained)
- 1 cup whole-wheat bread crumbs
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup milk (skim or 1%)
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil*

**Directions**
1. Use a fork to flake salmon until very fine.
2. Add whole-wheat bread crumbs, eggs, milk, and pepper to salmon.
3. Mix thoroughly.
4. Shape into 9 patties.
5. Heat oil in a skillet; replenish oil as necessary.
6. Over medium heat, carefully brown both sides until patty is thoroughly cooked.

**Recipe source (above):** adapted from http://www.yummly.com/recipe/external/Cheesy-Salmon-Pasta-Allrecipes

**Recipe source (right):** adapted from http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/salmon-patties

The recipes below incorporate salmon and whole wheat grains, are easily and quickly prepared, and healthy. Salmon is high in omega-3 fatty acids, which may decrease disease risk and whole wheat grains are high in fiber, an important nutrient for normal digestion.
“Blanching Project” in Northeast Indiana

Written by Briana Eicher, RD, CD, with content approved by Mr. Steve Corona

Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana in Fort Wayne, Indiana plans to open a blanch, chill and freeze operation by mid-2015, also known as their “Blanching Project.” IEFRN spoke with Mr. Steve Corona, Resource Development Office/Grant Writer/Marketing and Communications Specialist at Community Harvest Food Bank to learn more about this project. “This will be the first food bank in the country to establish an operation of this size,” says Mr. Corona. Their goals are to preserve and distribute fresh produce that would have otherwise been thrown away. They plan to begin with preserving carrots, potatoes, corn and green beans and hope to preserve other types of produce in the future. The large commissary building, donated by Mr. Alex Azar and his son George, will house blanching machines that rely on steam, rather than boiling, to help preserve the nutrients in the vegetables.

Product produced by the new facility will be distributed to residents in all nine counties of northeastern Indiana. The distribution process will include food pantries operated by churches and nonprofit groups as well as Community Harvest’s Farm Wagon and Community Cupboard. Farm Wagon is the name for the food bank’s mobile pantry program in which refrigerated trucks distribute food at designated locations throughout the region; Community Cupboard is a grocery store visited by families who are issued a voucher to shop for food items at the food bank’s facility on Tillman Road in Fort Wayne.