

The Perimenopause Kitchen

Protein at Every Meal

*A High-Protein Menopause Diet
Cookbook with 52 Easy Recipes for One
Everyday Meals to Keep Muscle and Strength
Through Perimenopause and Beyond*

 perimenostage

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How This Book Works

Every recipe in this book was chosen because it puts a real source of protein on the plate. There are 52 of them: 13 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 21 dinners and 10 snacks, from yogurt bowls to sheet-pan dinners. They cover vegetarian, pescatarian and omnivore kitchens. Twenty-one recipes have no meat or fish, so the book works for a household where people eat differently.

The chapters before the recipes explain why protein deserves attention in midlife, what the guidance says about how much, and why it works best alongside strength training. You can skip them and start cooking. They're there when you want the reasoning.

Portions and numbers

Each recipe is written for one person. The panel under the headnote gives five figures for that serving: calories, protein, fiber, calcium and sodium. They were calculated from USDA FoodData Central, ingredient by ingredient, for exactly the amounts listed. If you cook for two or four, multiply every ingredient; the per-serving figures stay the same. Bigger batches can take a little longer to cook, so follow the doneness cues rather than the clock alone.

Sodium is there because protein foods often bring salt with them: cheese, cottage cheese, canned beans, salsa, bread and tortillas. US guidance sets a daily limit of 2,300 mg. Forty-seven recipes here have under 700 mg a serving, and the five that run higher, between 728 and 815 mg, are the burritos, enchiladas, pad thai and cottage cheese toast. The Recipe Finder at the back lists the lowest-sodium recipes. Three recipes use a little honey or maple syrup, 2 to 6 grams of added sugar per serving; the other 49 have none.

Labels on each recipe

The line under the title tells you the total time and which diet the recipe fits: *vegetarian* (may include eggs and dairy), *pescatarian* (adds fish and shellfish), *no red meat* (adds poultry) or *everything* (includes beef or pork). Flags mark recipes that suit *batch* cooking, make good *left-overs*, or are built on *budget* staples.

The *Contains* line names the major allergens in the ingredients as written: milk and lactose, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat or gluten, soy and sesame. Packaged foods differ and change, so check the label of anything you buy if you have an allergy.

Quantities are in US cups, spoons and ounces with grams in brackets. Oven settings are in Fahrenheit with Celsius in brackets.

Food safety

Most recipes here use meat, poultry, fish, shellfish or eggs, so every method gives a doneness cue based on the USDA’s safe minimum internal temperatures. An instant-read thermometer is the easiest way to know. Push it into the thickest part of the food, away from bone and away from the pan.

FOOD	COOK UNTIL IT REACHES
Steaks, chops and pork tenderloin	145°F (63°C), then rest 3 minutes
Ground beef	160°F (71°C)
Ground chicken or turkey	165°F (74°C)
Chicken breasts and thighs	165°F (74°C)
Fish	145°F (63°C), or until it’s opaque and flakes easily with a fork
Shrimp	flesh pearly white and opaque
Eggs	yolk and white firm
Egg dishes such as muffins and frittatas	160°F (71°C)
Leftovers and reheated dishes	165°F (74°C)

Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The eggs in this book are cooked until the yolk is firm, as the USDA advises, including the fried and poached ones. Cooked chicken, turkey and shrimp that you eat cold keep three to four days in the fridge.

Cook’s notes after some recipes add a practical tip. Every kitchen runs a little differently, so treat times as a guide.

The free stage check

The free stage check at perimenostage.com/kitchen2 takes about two minutes and estimates where you are in the transition. More links are in Where to Go Next at the back.

This book uses “women” because the research it draws on studied women. Trans men and nonbinary people with ovaries go through perimenopause too, and the book is for them as well.

What a serving looks like

MedlinePlus gives a simple rule of thumb: one ounce of meat, poultry or fish, one large egg, a quarter cup of tofu, or half a cup of cooked beans or lentils each provides about 7 grams of protein. Dairy is concentrated too. Weight for weight, plain Greek yogurt and cottage cheese have about three times the protein of milk.

PROTEIN IN EVERYDAY PORTIONS	PORTION	PROTEIN
Chicken breast, roasted	3 oz (85 g)	26 g
Lean top sirloin, broiled	3 oz (85 g)	25 g
Pork tenderloin, roasted	3 oz (85 g)	22 g
Firm tofu, set with calcium sulfate	½ cup (126 g)	22 g
Shrimp, cooked	3 oz (85 g)	20 g
Salmon, baked	3 oz (85 g)	19 g
Plain nonfat Greek yogurt	¾ cup (170 g)	17 g
Light tuna, canned in water	3 oz (85 g)	17 g
Eggs, hard-boiled	2 large (100 g)	13 g
Cottage cheese, 2%	½ cup (113 g)	12 g
Edamame, cooked	½ cup (78 g)	9 g
Lentils, cooked	½ cup (99 g)	9 g
Pumpkin seeds	1 oz (28 g)	9 g
1% milk	1 cup (244 g)	8 g
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup (185 g)	8 g
Black beans, cooked	½ cup (86 g)	8 g

Source: USDA FoodData Central (SR Legacy).

Breakfasts in this book give 21 to 30 grams of protein per serving, lunches and dinners 24 to 48 grams, and snacks 13 to 18 grams. The breakfasts average 26 grams, which is where most people fall short.

Across the day

MedlinePlus points out that the essential amino acids, the parts of protein your body can't make, don't have to be eaten at every meal; the balance over the whole day matters more. In



Greek yogurt parfait with raspberries and toasted oats

Greek yogurt layered with raspberries, oats and pumpkin seeds, with a teaspoon of honey. Strained (Greek) yogurt carries much more protein than regular yogurt, and this bowl has 29 grams.

341

KCAL

29g

PROTEIN

8.1g

FIBER

258mg

CALCIUM

75mg

SODIUM

Contains: milk (dairy), lactose, wheat or gluten

INGREDIENTS

Serves 1 · doubles or quadruples easily.

1 cup (200 g) plain nonfat Greek yogurt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (80 g) raspberries

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (20 g) rolled oats

2 tbsp (15 g) pumpkin seeds

1 tsp honey

METHOD

- 1** Toast the oats in a dry pan, 2–3 minutes.
- 2** Layer the yogurt, raspberries, oats and pumpkin seeds.
- 3** Drizzle with the honey.

COOK'S NOTE

To pack it for later, keep the toasted oats and pumpkin seeds in a separate small container so they stay crunchy.



Steak salad with potatoes, arugula and goat cheese

Seared sirloin sliced over warm potatoes, arugula and tomatoes, with a little goat cheese and balsamic. It's a full meal in a salad bowl, with 30 grams of protein.

430

KCAL

30g

PROTEIN

6g

FIBER

166mg

CALCIUM

290mg

SODIUM

Contains: milk (dairy), lactose

INGREDIENTS

Serves 1 · doubles or quadruples easily.

3 oz (90 g) top sirloin steak

1 medium potato (200 g)

2½ cups (50 g) arugula

½ cup (80 g) cherry tomatoes

½ oz (20 g) soft goat cheese

½ tbsp (7 g) olive oil

½ tbsp (8 g) balsamic vinegar

a pinch of salt

a pinch of black pepper

METHOD

- 1** Boil the diced potato 10 minutes; drain.
- 2** Season the steak with the salt and pepper and sear 3 minutes a side, until it reaches 145°F (63°C); rest 3 minutes and slice.
- 3** Toss the arugula, tomatoes and potatoes with the oil and balsamic; top with steak and goat cheese.



Sheet-pan chicken thighs with chickpeas and vegetables

Chicken thighs, chickpeas, zucchini, peppers and onion roasted together with paprika and cumin. Everything goes on one tray, and leftovers pack well for lunch.

431

KCAL

35g

PROTEIN

10g

FIBER

97mg

CALCIUM

506mg

SODIUM

Contains: none of the major allergens listed in this book (check labels)

INGREDIENTS

Serves 1 · doubles or quadruples easily.

4½ oz (130 g) boneless skinless chicken thighs

¾ cup (100 g) canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed

½ medium zucchini (100 g)

¾ red bell pepper (80 g)

½ medium onion (50 g)

½ tbsp (7 g) olive oil

½ tsp paprika

½ tsp ground cumin

1 tsp lemon juice

a pinch of salt

METHOD

- 1** Heat the oven to 425°F (220°C).
- 2** Toss everything except the lemon with the oil and spices on a tray.
- 3** Roast 30–35 minutes until the chicken reaches 165°F (74°C) inside; squeeze over lemon.

Planning a Protein-Forward Week

There's no meal plan in this book, because the right week depends on your schedule, your household and what you like to eat. These guidelines make it quick to plan your own.

Anchor each meal. Before you decide what else is on the plate, decide what the protein is. Eggs, yogurt or cottage cheese for breakfast; fish, poultry, beans or cheese for lunch and dinner.

Fix breakfast first. It's the meal most likely to be light on protein. Pick two breakfasts you like, one that takes five minutes and one for slower mornings, and rotate them. The egg muffins and boiled eggs can be made on Sunday for the whole week.

Cook once, eat twice. Dinners marked *leftovers* make the next day's lunch. Roasting two chicken thighs or a whole pork tenderloin takes no more effort than one portion.

Vary the sources. Over a week, include fish once or twice, eggs and dairy most days, beans or lentils several times, and poultry or meat if you eat them. Each food brings its own mix of other nutrients, so variety covers more of them.

Keep snacks ready. A tub of Greek yogurt, a can of tuna, hummus and cooked chicken in the fridge mean a protein snack is always minutes away.

Plan training days. On days you do strength training, make sure the meal before or after it includes protein.

A sample week

Here is one week built on those guidelines, to show how the pieces fit. It's an example, not a prescription.

Sunday before: bake a triple batch of egg muffins and boil four eggs. **Monday:** roast the sheet-pan chicken for two and pack the second serving for Tuesday's lunch. **Tuesday:** bake the enchiladas for two; the second serving is Wednesday's lunch. **Thursday:** make the lentil and rice peppers for two for Friday's lunch. **Saturday:** roast a whole pork tenderloin for two; the rest is Sunday's lunch.

DAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
Monday 103 g protein 28 g fiber 1,083 mg calcium 1,488 mg sodium	Vegetable egg muffins with fruit 43	Tomato, mozzarella and white bean quinoa bowl 61	Sheet-pan chicken thighs with chickpeas and vegetables 99	Greek yogurt with strawberries and almonds 115
Tuesday 105 g protein 36 g fiber 925 mg calcium 1,614 mg sodium	Greek yogurt parfait with raspberries and toasted oats 31	Sheet-pan chicken thighs with chickpeas and vegetables 99	Black bean and cheese enchiladas 71	Two boiled eggs with cherry tomatoes 127
Wednesday 97 g protein 32 g fiber 1,078 mg calcium 1,847 mg sodium	Vegetable egg muffins with fruit 43	Black bean and cheese enchiladas 71	Baked salmon with sweet potato and green beans 67	Cottage cheese with pineapple 113
Thursday 94 g protein 26 g fiber 796 mg calcium 1,360 mg sodium	Cottage cheese with peaches and walnuts 25	Shrimp, mango and rice salad 55	Lentil and rice stuffed peppers with feta 89	Lactose-free yogurt with berries 117
Friday 108 g protein 38 g fiber 876 mg calcium 1,483 mg sodium	Vegetable egg muffins with fruit 43	Lentil and rice stuffed peppers with feta 89	Cod with white beans, tomatoes and spinach 79	Tuna-stuffed avocado 125
Saturday 115 g protein 30 g fiber 876 mg calcium 1,393 mg sodium	Egg, black bean and cheddar burrito 29	Steak salad with potatoes, arugula and goat cheese 59	Pork tenderloin with roast butternut and Brussels sprouts 91	Greek yogurt with strawberries and almonds 115
Sunday 109 g protein 33 g fiber 845 mg calcium 1,406 mg sodium	Sardines and tomato on toast 37	Pork tenderloin with roast butternut and Brussels sprouts 91	Shakshuka with white beans and bread 97	Chicken and hummus lettuce cups 111

Every day reaches at least 94 grams of protein, 26 grams of fiber and 796 mg of calcium, and stays under 1,900 mg of sodium. The days come to 1,403 to 1,552 kcal. That's a light week for many women, so add fruit, a slice of bread, a glass of milk or a bigger portion of the grain whenever you're hungry.

If you'd like a plan built around you, perimenostage.com/meal-plan builds a 28-day plan from your answers about how you eat, allergies and foods you avoid, how long you have to cook, and who you cook for.