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Plant Protein After 50

Your quick reference, whether you're vegan or vegetarian. It's not just about hitting a protein number. Here are the 3 rules that keep your muscle working for you, plus the add-a-zero test.

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Rule 1: Flip the muscle-building switch

every meal

Aim for **2.5–3 g of leucine per meal**, the amount that switches on muscle-building.

Leucine per serving

Low-fat cottage cheese, 1 cup	**2.8 g**
Whey protein, 1 scoop	**2.5–3.0 g**
Tempeh, 1 cup V	**2.4 g**
Nonfat Greek yogurt, 1 cup	**2.3 g**
Egg whites, 1 cup	**2.2 g**
Pea or soy protein, 1 scoop V	**2.0 g**
Firm tofu, ½ block V	**1.9 g**
TVP, ½ cup dry V	**1.9 g**
Lupini beans, 1 cup V	**1.8 g**
Seitan, 3 oz V	**1.4 g**
Edamame, 1 cup V	**1.4 g**
Lentils, 1 cup V	**1.3 g**
Black beans, 1 cup V	**1.2 g**
Whole eggs, 2	**1.1 g**
Chickpeas, 1 cup V	**1.0 g**
Hemp protein, 1 scoop V	**0.9 g**
Soy milk, 1 cup V	**0.6 g**

Approximate. Beans and lentils are cooked. A scoop is about 20–25 g protein; brands vary.

Stack your way to the switch

½ block tofu + 1 cup edamame	**3.3 g**
½ cup TVP + 1 cup lentils	**3.2 g**
1 cup tempeh + ½ cup lentils	**3.0 g**
1 scoop pea protein + 1 cup soy milk	**2.6 g**
3 oz seitan + 1 cup black beans	**2.6 g**

Most single servings fall short. Two proteins in one meal, or a scoop of powder on the side, is usually what gets you there.

Rule 2: Cover all 9 essential amino acids

over the day

Complete on their own	Tofu, tempeh, edamame, TVP, soy milk · quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth · blended powders like pea + rice · eggs and dairy
Rotate your protein families	Soy · beans, lentils & peas · grains & seitan · nuts & seeds · eggs & dairy
How often	Pull from at least two families a day. They don't have to be in the same meal.

Rule 3: Keep your calories in check

the add-a-zero test

1. Find the **grams of protein** and the **calories**.
2. Add a zero to the protein.
3. Equal to or more than the calories? **Protein food.** Less? **Pair it with one that passes.**

Vegetarian and vegan protein sources, ranked

V = vegan

PASSES THE TEST	VERY CLOSE	GREAT FOODS, NOT PROTEIN FOODS
Egg whites	Edamame V	Lentils V
Seitan V	Soy milk V	Black beans V
Pea or soy protein powder V	Skim milk	Chickpeas V
Whey protein powder	Whole eggs	Green peas V
Plain nonfat Greek yogurt		Nuts and nut butters V
Low-fat cottage cheese		Quinoa V
TVP V		Seeds: hemp, flax, chia V
Lupini beans V		Cheese
Firm or extra-firm tofu V		
Tempeh V		

At every meal: protein first. Everything else second.

Pick an **anchor** from "Passes the test," then add the foods you love around it. Change up your anchor through the day.

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General education, not medical advice. This guide is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease. If your doctor or dietitian has given you a protein limit, follow their advice.