



Protein: a free guide for parents

Listen together, then ask: What happens to protein after you eat it? A useful answer is that digestion breaks proteins into smaller parts called amino acids, which the body absorbs and uses to make proteins it needs.

Words made simple

Protein: a nutrient used for many body structures and jobs. Amino acids: small building parts that make up proteins. Digestion: breaking food into smaller parts. Absorption: moving useful small parts from the gut into the body. Digestive enzymes: helpers that break food into smaller parts. The building-block picture is a learning aid, not a description of literal toy bricks inside us.

Practical health tips

Start with a meal your family already enjoys and identify one protein-containing food: eggs, fish, poultry, beans, lentils or tofu, depending on individual needs and preferences. Pair it with other foods your family enjoys rather than treating protein as the whole meal.

In Finally Focused, Greenblatt emphasizes protein-containing foods at meals and snack times in his ADHD-focused nutrition discussion. Hyman's The Pegan Diet also emphasizes food quality and variety. This is useful food-first context; it does not establish that protein treats ADHD or guarantees better attention.

Try it together

Name the food, imagine digestion making smaller amino-acid parts, then point to something the body builds or maintains. A child can draw or tell the journey. No food tasting, measuring body weight or supplement is needed for the activity.



References and amounts

Children: a personal daily amount

The reviewed child-focused functional medicine passages recommend including protein foods at meals, but do not establish a daily gram target for every child aged 4–10. A child's actual daily amount should account for age, size, growth and medical circumstances. Ask the child's pediatric clinician or dietitian for an appropriate target rather than applying an adult formula. We have not filled this gap with an unsupported number.

Adults: a food-portion recommendation

In The Pegan Diet, Hyman recommends, for adults, two 4-ounce servings of animal-protein food a day. Four ounces here means the weight of the food, not four ounces of pure protein. It is not a universal daily gram requirement, a plan for children or a requirement to eat animal foods. A personal adult target also depends on individual circumstances.

Functional medicine references first

James Greenblatt and Bill Gottlieb, Finally Focused, chapter 8, Adding Protein at Breakfast (and Throughout the Day); uploaded PDF pp.145–147. Mark Hyman, The Pegan Diet, protein takeaways section and food-quality discussion. Hyman's own [Protein and Your Health](#) explains adult protein context; its adult formula should not be repurposed for children.

Supporting physiology and recap

NIDDK: digestion and absorption. Bodies break dietary proteins into amino acids and absorb these small parts. The body uses them to build its own proteins. Different foods can contribute protein; protein alone is not the whole diet.

The four recap answers

1. A: amino acids. 2. B: the small-intestine lining. 3. True: protein foods can come from plants as well as animals. 4. A: grow, repair tissues and make useful proteins.

Keep known food allergies and safe food preparation in mind when choosing examples for a child. Food education here does not require a protein powder or amino-acid supplement.