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Top 10 Sources of Protein Intake for Hepatitis C



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Find out why most people with Hepatitis C need to eat plenty of protein, and which protein sources are the best.



6. *Dairy* – Despite many people having dairy allergies or intolerances, dairy remains a good source of protein. Just one cup of skim milk or soymilk contains 8 grams of protein while one slice of cheese ranges from 6 to 9 grams of protein.
7. *Lean Poultry* – Both great sources of lean animal protein, a 3-ounce portion of chicken breast contains 16 grams of protein while a 3-ounce portion of turkey breast contains 26 grams of protein. Due to the use of antibiotics, chemical processing, unsanitary conditions and other environmental concerns, organic sources of poultry are a much better choice for those with liver disease.
8. *Nuts and Seeds* – Great for a tasty snack that also boosts protein levels, nuts and seeds are ideal for in-between meals. A 1-ounce serving of pumpkin seeds contains 9 grams of protein, a 1-ounce serving of almonds contains 6 grams of protein, and 1 ounce of flaxseeds contains 5 grams of protein.
9. *Protein Shakes* – All protein shakes are not created equally. Some shakes (like UltraNourish) are geared towards liver health and do not contain added sugar while others contain ingredients that may aggravate inflammation in the liver. In addition, shakes get their protein from a variety of different sources. Some are derived from dairy (whey, casein), some from egg protein and some from pea protein (UltraNourish). For comparison's sake, one scoop of UltraNourish provides 16 grams of protein. While all may be great options to get enough protein, pea protein is considered to be the best because this vegetarian source is rarely associated with allergies, contains a substantial amount of protein and is easily absorbed.
10. *Protein Bars* – Like protein shakes, protein bars are also not all created equally. Fortunately, some bars (like Superfood Protein Bars) contain valuable ingredients to aid in liver health, including chicory root, green tea, spirulina, nuts and more. Superfood Protein Bars contain up to 9 grams of plant-derived protein.

Animal vs. Plant Protein

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For vegetarians with chronic Hepatitis C, there are fewer choices for getting enough protein in their diet. However, this isn't the only reason to steer towards plant protein. Those with more advanced stages of liver disease are encouraged to only consume vegetable sources of protein due to ammonia content.

Although animal sources have the highest protein levels, a diet high in animal protein typically contains a lot of ammonia. Excessive ammonia in the bloodstream may precipitate an episode of encephalopathy – abnormal brain function that can be caused by blood toxicity in those with low liver function. Vegetarian sources of protein have low ammonia content and are less likely to induce encephalopathy. Some popular weight-loss diets specify the consumption of lots of animal protein. People with cirrhosis are encouraged to avoid diets that emphasize lots of animal protein.

In addition, some sources indicate that vegetable and dairy proteins are preferable to those with sensitive digestive tracts. This is because of their makeup; vegetable and dairy proteins have a lower content of Aromatic Amino Acids (Methionine and Glutamine) and higher content of Branched-Chain Amino Acids (Valine, Leucine and Isoleucine). A growing collection of research on branched-chain amino acids indicate that these protein building blocks are better tolerated and are beneficial to those with chronic liver disease.

Considerations for Protein Consumption

When it comes to the ideal protein consumption plan for those with chronic Hepatitis C, one size does not fit all. There are many considerations including body weight, severity of liver disease, food preferences, sensitivities and allergies. Nonetheless, most people with Hepatitis C are encouraged to be aware of their protein consumption because, more than likely, their liver could benefit from greater amino acid quantities.

Editor's Note: Always consult with a physician or nutritionist for dietary requirements specific to your health condition. This is important because some individuals with encephalopathy may be advised to strictly limit their protein intake.

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