

Let's lunch and learn!

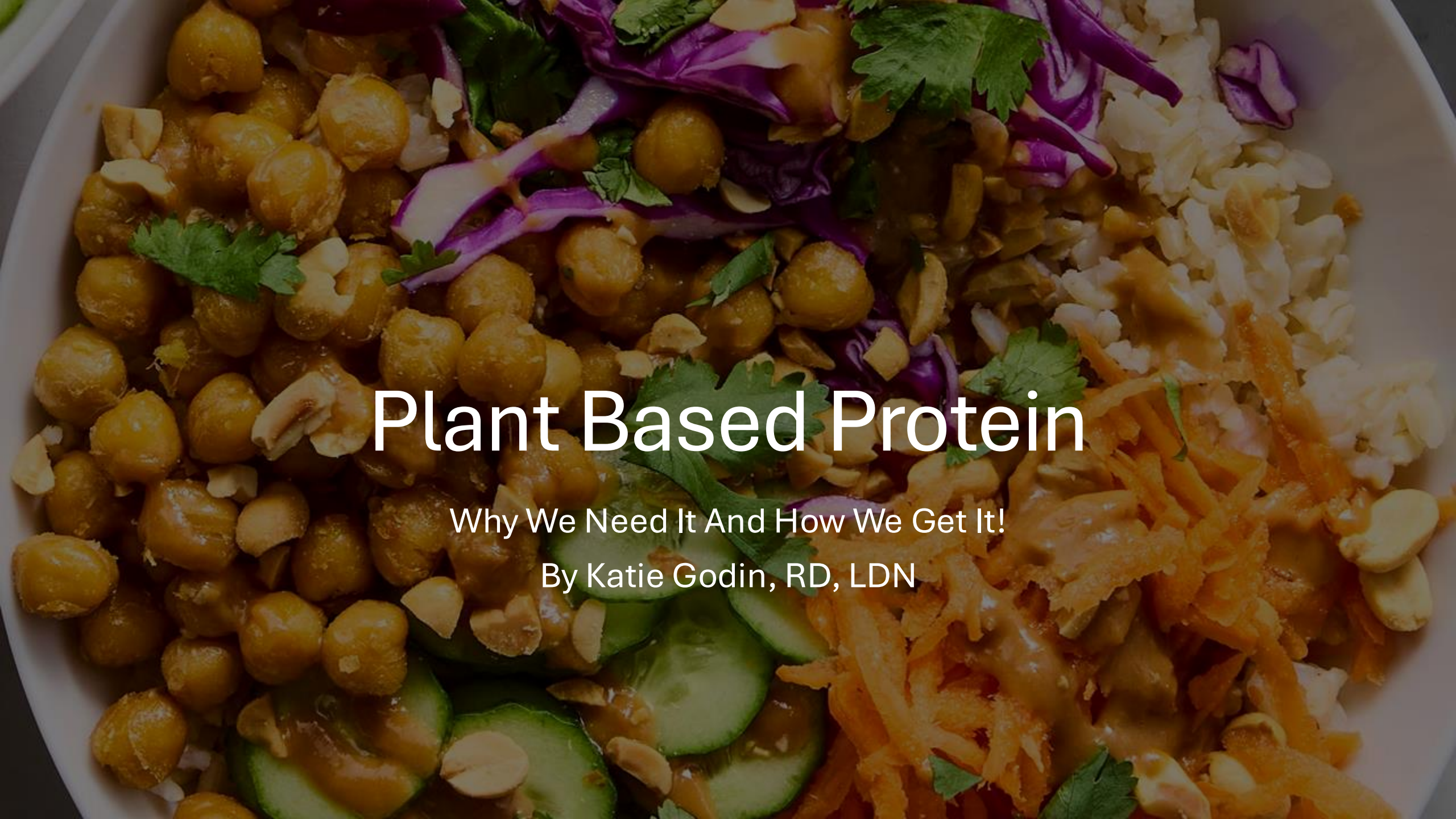
August 2026

If you participate in the State Health Plan, you can find a nutritionist near you by logging into your Aetna account.

Dietician visits are covered at 100 percent when an in-network provider is used. Visit www.shpnc.gov to learn more.

For future Worksite Wellness Lunch and Learn events or recordings of previous events, visit oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars.



A top-down view of a white bowl filled with a chickpea salad. The salad includes golden-brown chickpeas, sliced cucumbers, shredded purple cabbage, green cilantro leaves, and sliced almonds. A portion of the salad on the right side of the bowl is topped with a layer of shredded orange carrots. The text "Plant Based Protein" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Plant Based Protein

Why We Need It And How We Get It!

By Katie Godin, RD, LDN

Katie Godin, RD, LDN

- Lifestyle Medical Centers offers Nutrition Counseling to assist with educating you on how to make positive lifestyle changes alongside continual support and encouragement.
- **Services offered:**
 - Weight Management
 - Women's Health
 - Sports Nutrition
 - Chronic Disease Counseling
 - Bariatric Support
 - Smoking Cessation
 - Sleep Assessment and Stress Management
- <https://lifestylemedicalcenters.com/>



A top-down view of various plant-based protein sources arranged around a central sign that reads "PLANT BASED PROTEIN". The items include quinoa, lentils, chickpeas, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, broccoli, cauliflower, and various grains.

Supports Heart Health

- Plant proteins such as beans, lentils, nuts, and soy are generally lower in saturated fat and higher fiber than many animal proteins.
- They may help lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol, blood pressure, and the risk of heart disease.
- Plant based proteins also have higher anti-oxidant content (fiber, polyphenols) vs. virtually none in animal protein which aids with inflammation, supporting cardiovascular health.



Supports a Healthy Weight

- Plant based proteins being rich in protein as well as fiber provide additional support with satiety (fullness), helping to support a healthy weight.
- Lower calorie intake can often be associated with plant-based proteins when compared with higher fat / processed animal proteins, supporting healthy weight as a result.



Improves Digestive Health

- Do to the fiber in plant based protein , there is a positive impact on our digestive health.
- Fiber promotes regular bowel movements, supports beneficial gut bacteria, and improves overall digestive health.



Supports Blood Sugar Control

- Plant based proteins such as beans, lentils, peas, and whole grains have a low glycemic index (*how quickly a carbohydrate rich food raises your blood sugar*) and are digested more slowly.
- This helps to stabilize blood sugar levels and improve insulin sensitivity.



Reduces Risk of Type 2 Diabetes

- Plant based protein is associated with healthy fat, fiber, and anti-oxidants all of which help to support blood sugar control and reduce your risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.
- Fat and fiber from food such as legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains help to slow down the digestion of a meal, leading to delayed blood sugar spikes and better blood sugar control.
- Saturated fat (commonly found in animal protein sources) can build up inside muscle and liver cells, blocking normal insulin signals and stopping cells from taking in sugar from the blood. Plant based proteins can help with insulin sensitivity (which is how well your body responds to the hormone insulin / aiding in blood sugar control).



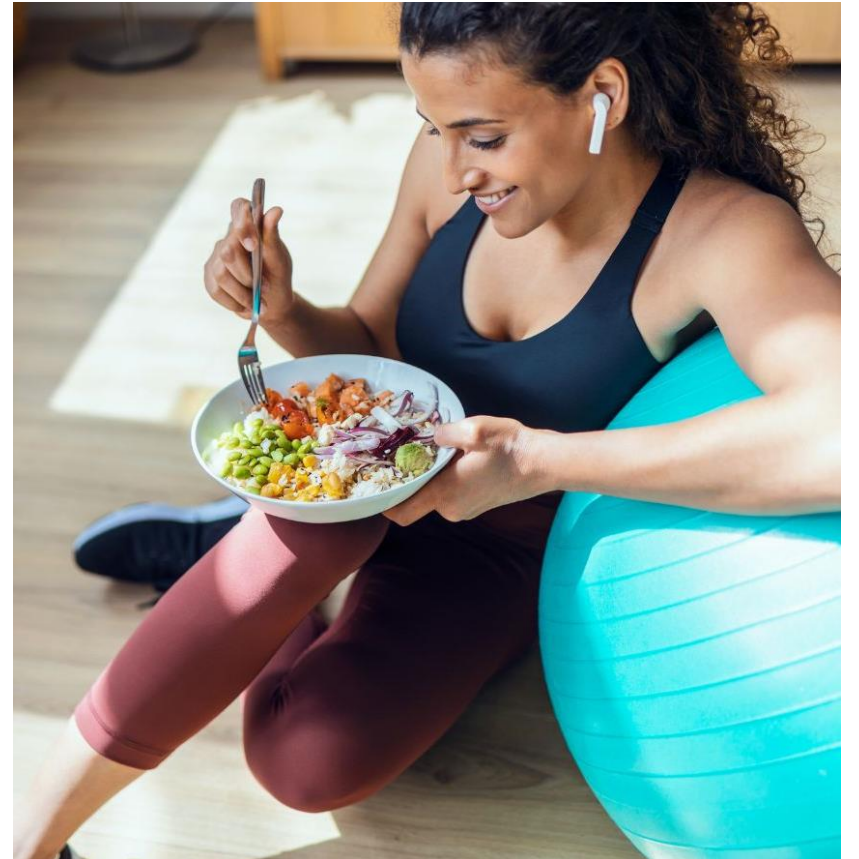
May Lower Cancer Risk

- Diets emphasizing whole plant foods are linked with a lower risk of certain cancers, particularly colorectal cancer.
- The fiber, antioxidants, and phytochemicals found in plant foods likely contribute to this protective effect.



Supports Healthy Muscles

- When consumed in adequate amounts, plant proteins can effectively support muscle growth, maintenance, and recovery.
- Excellent choices include soy foods, lentils, beans, quinoa, tofu, tempeh, and pea protein.
- Plant based protein powders are also excellent options for those who have challenges meeting their unique protein needs from food alone.
- ***Things to consider:*** To get adequate amino acid profile you need a variety of plant proteins compared to eating animal products and you may require more overall protein to achieve this goal as well.



Whole Food Plant Based Protein Sources

Legumes / Soy

Tempeh = 34g per cup

Seitan = 20-25g per 3.5oz

Firm Tofu = 22g per cup

Edamame = 18g per shelled cup

Lentils = 18g per cooked cup

Chickpeas = 15g per cooked cup

Nuts/Seeds/Grains

Hemp Seeds = 10g per 3 Tbsp

Nutritional Yeast = 8g per 0.5 oz

Quinoa = 8g per cooked cup

Chia Seeds = 5g per 2 Tbsp

Almonds = 6g per oz (handful)

Convenience Products to Consider



Mediterranean Style 8.8 OZ





Simple Plant Based Meal Ideas!



Mediterranean Chickpea Bowl

Ingredients:

- 1 cup chickpeas (canned, rinsed)
- 1 cup cooked quinoa or brown rice
- Cherry tomatoes
- Cucumber
- Spinach or mixed greens
- Crumbled feta (optional)
- Olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, oregano

Instructions:

- Combine the quinoa, chickpeas, and vegetables in a bowl.
- Drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice.
- Season with garlic, oregano, salt, and pepper.

Protein: ~18–22 g per serving



Tofu Veggie Stir-fry

Ingredients:

- ½ block extra-firm tofu, cubed
- Broccoli
- Bell peppers
- Carrots
- Snap peas
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- Soy sauce, garlic, ginger, sesame oil

Instructions:

- Sauté the tofu until golden.
- Add the vegetables and cook until crisp-tender.
- Stir in soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and a splash of sesame oil.
- Serve over brown rice.

Protein: ~20–25 g per serving

Peanut Butter Banana Overnight Oats

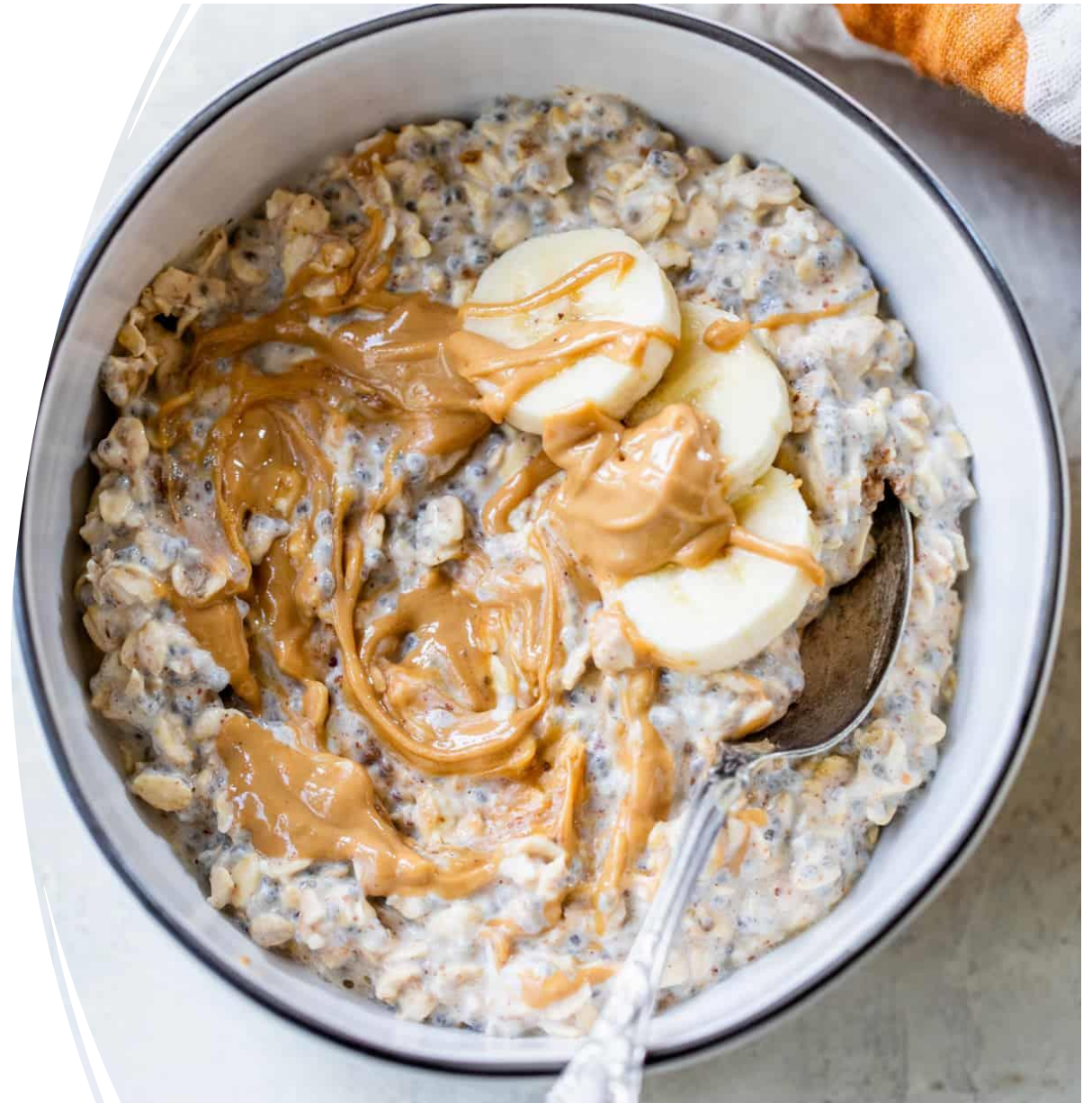
Ingredients:

- ½ cup rolled oats
- 1 cup unsweetened soy milk
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 banana, sliced
- Cinnamon (optional)

Instructions:

- Mix the oats, soy milk, peanut butter, and chia seeds in a jar.
- Refrigerate overnight.
- Top with banana slices and cinnamon before serving.

Protein: ~15–20 g per serving

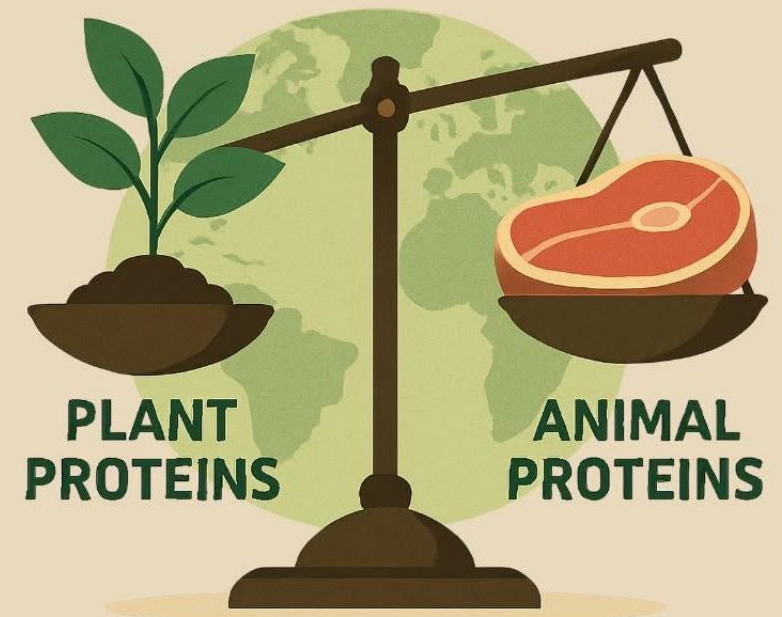


Helpful Tip!

- Aim to include a source of plant protein at each meal. Combining a variety of foods—such as beans with whole grains, or nuts and seeds with legumes—can help you meet your protein needs while also providing fiber, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals. For most people, eating a diverse mix of plant protein sources over the course of the day provides all the essential amino acids the body needs.

Shifting towards more plant-based protein doesn't mean going fully vegetarian or vegan.

It simply means adding more plant protein foods and variety to your plate.



References

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/boosting-share-of-protein-from-plants-in-diet-may-lower-heart-disease-risk>
- <https://lifestylemedicine.org/benefits-plant-based-nutrition-obesity/>
- <https://journals.physiology.org/doi/full/10.1152/japplphysiol.01438.2005>
- <https://www.foxchase.org/blog/5-things-oncologist-wants-everyone-know-about-reducing-risk-cancer>



Let's Cook!

Chickpea Salad

Recipe: <https://natashaskitchen.com/chickpea-salad-recipe/>

Nutrition Facts

Per Serving (6 servings per recipe)

Calories 302

Carbs 27g

Protein 10g

Fat 17g