



Institute of Spinal Disorders

Dietary Planning

After your surgery it will be helpful to plan ahead. Prepare extra individual servings of meals a week prior to your surgery. Label and freeze the food for use after you have your surgery. Stock up on low sodium soups, vegetables, and fruit. Also have easily accessible sources of high protein snacks such as peanut butter, cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt.

Each item listed equals 7 grams of protein:

Poultry:	Chicken or turkey, Cornish hen (no skin)	1 oz.
Fish:	Fresh or frozen cod, flounder, haddock, trout, tuna fresh or canned salmon, catfish, sardines	1 oz. ¼ cup
Game:	Duck or pheasant (no skin), venison, buffalo, ostrich, goose	1 oz.
Beef:	Ground beef, meatloaf, corned beef, short ribs, round, sirloin, roast, steak, prime grades of meat trimmed of fat	1 oz.
Lamb:	Roast, chop, leg, rib roast, ground	1 oz.
Shellfish:	Clams, crab, lobster, scallops, shrimp, or oysters	1 oz.
Cheese:	American, Feta, Swiss, Mozzarella, Ricotta	1 oz.
	Nonfat or low-fat cottage cheese	¼ cup
Milk:	Skim/nonfat or 1%	1 cup
Eggs:	whole egg	1
	egg whites	2
	egg substitute	¼ cup
Beans:	Beans 3c peas (garbanzo, pinto, kidney, white, split, black-eyed)	½ cup
Nuts:	Peanuts	10 nuts
	Pecans	4 halves
	Almonds, cashews, mixed nuts	6 nuts
	Peanut butter	2 Tbsp
	Nuts/seeds	¼ cup
Other:	Sausage (lean)	1 oz.
	Soy milk	1 cup
	Tofu	1 oz.

Importance of proteins

After surgery, sufficient protein intake is essential and often critical to a successful surgical outcome. The importance of adequate protein cannot be overlooked in regards to improving your surgical outcome. Some reasons that exist for this increased protein demand are as follows:

1. Protein is necessary for Rebuilding tissue in surgical wound site. Increased protein intake is needed as early as possible to obtain adequate amounts of protein to ensure healing of the surgical site.
2. Control of edema (swelling). When the blood protein level is low, especially after surgery, fluid leaks out of your vascular system into the tissue incision site and causes significant swelling. The shift of this fluid in and out of the vascular system can negatively affect the performance of your heart and lungs which can lead to complications after surgery. Local swelling at the surgical site delays the normal healing process of the incision.
3. Bone healing. After orthopedic and spinal surgery, extensive bone healing is involved. Protein is essential for proper bone healing. Protein is laid down during the bone formation first followed by calcium. If your body does not have adequate protein stores the body will not be able to lay down a protein bed to accept the calcium. This will lead to a soft poor healing bone and can prevent proper fusion in the spinal.
4. Resistance to infection. Proteins are involved in body defense mechanism: Is used to make the cells and antibodies that your body uses to fight off infection. Low protein levels lead to a poorly functioning immune system. A poorly functioning immune system leads to high levels of postoperative infection. In order to prevent a postoperative infection it is important to have adequate protein supply to power your immune system properly.