

4 Ways To Add Protein Into Your Vegetarian Diet

You may have wondered, 'Is cheese a good protein source?' or 'Can I eat eggs for protein even though my doc said they have cholesterol?' and 'Daal has protein, right?'. With all the conflicting guidance out there, finding reliable information to answer those questions must have been tough.

So, let's start by answering some of those questions for you.

Is cheese a good protein source?

With a caveat. It's high in fat, so a thumb size portion once or twice weekly is acceptable.

Is it better to throw away the egg yolks?

Dietary cholesterol found in egg yolks does not increase your blood cholesterol levels, so please do not throw away those precious egg yolks packed with good nutrients.

Does daal provide enough protein for the day?

Daal has some protein but three to four times the amount of carbohydrates (starch) that goes with it, making it calorie dense. While daal can provide protein and some micronutrients, only half to one cup is recommended a day.

Vegetarians do have reliable protein options and some *complete* protein options too. While animal products can, most plant based foods cannot be considered a source of complete protein since they are lacking in one or a few essential amino acids. So, combining a variety of colourful and non-starchy vegetables with grains and dairy, cooking daal along with vegetables as well as including eggs daily, can be sure to get you your vegetarian *complete* protein everyday.

Below, we present four ways to make *complete* proteins part of your meals without having to carve into any tender cuts of meat.

Eggs (if you are a vegetarian who eats eggs)

How much: 2 - 3 eggs daily (not more than 4 eggs per day)

Eggs can be boiled, scrambled/burji with leftover veggies, poached or cracked open over dosa or in *shakshuka* (look it up!). This is your low maintenance and versatile *complete* protein source for everyday.

Dairy: milk, curd and paneer**How much: Milk and curd - 1 cup daily**

Paneer - 75 grams or 1 fist sized portion, three to four times per week

One cup of milk or one cup of curd can provide 6 - 8 grams of protein each. This is a dependable, no-cook protein option for everyday. Milk can be mixed with a protein supplement and blended with fruit. Curd is easy to overdo. So, be conscious of sticking to the recommended 1 cup per day.

Paneer is another option that can be added to non-oily vegetable gravy, grated onto dosa or made into a burji combined with chopped vegetables. 75 grams or an average fist sized portion of paneer provides 13 - 14 grams of protein. Since paneer is high in fat like cheese, it's important to limit consumption to three to four times per week.

A daal, a grain and a green

How much: The average active individual can eat 1 cup of rice or 2 rotis with ½ cup daal cooked with 1-1½ cups greens/non-starchy vegetables in a meal. Can be eaten daily

You can combine rice/roti, daal and non-starchy vegetables to arrive at a meal providing complete protein, at home or when you eat out.

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~~One cup of pram or non-oily mixed veg rice or dry tawa roti can be enjoyed with half a cup of non-oily plain daal and one to one and a half cups of a non-oily non-starchy vegetable side dish.~~

Alternatively, the daal can be used as a medium to cook non-starchy, green vegetables and this can be enjoyed with rice. When ordering food, make sure to ask for non-oily versions of the dishes. Rather than making rice or daal the star of the meal, make sure to consume more vegetables than the rice or daal. Vegetables should be eaten daily while rice and daal can be eaten daily in the amounts recommended above.

Protein supplements

How much: 1 - 2 scoops (roughly 25 grams protein per scoop), especially on workout days.

Whether you choose whey, pea or hemp protein, this is an easy, portable and reliable way to supplement your overall protein intake, post-workout or otherwise. Mix with water for a quick boost before workout. Or blend with milk and banana/berries for a satisfying post-workout fix.