

How Much Protein Do You Actually Need?

Protein intake by fitness goal, activity level and body fat percentage

For an average person with moderate activity, **1.5 to 2.0 g of protein per kg of bodyweight** is a solid, evidence-based target. But the rule quietly breaks down at higher body fat. Multiply 2 g by a 110 kg bodyweight and you get 220 g, yet fat tissue doesn't need protein the way muscle does. A person with a lot of body fat and very low activity who forces down 200 to 250 g a day is eating far more than their body can use, and often gets bloated and constipated for it. This guide shows how to set a target that fits your goal, your activity and your body composition.

1. The Starting Point: Protein per kg of Bodyweight

For people at a healthy body fat level

GOAL / PROFILE	ACTIVITY LEVEL	PROTEIN (G PER KG PER DAY)
General health	Sedentary (desk job, little exercise)	0.8 - 1.0
Staying healthy and fit	Light (daily walks, occasional workouts)	1.0 - 1.4
Average person training for fitness	Moderate (3 to 4 sessions a week)	1.5 - 2.0
Building muscle	Regular strength training	1.6 - 2.2
Losing fat while keeping muscle	Moderate to high	1.8 - 2.2

Where the numbers come from: The official minimum of 0.8 g per kg only prevents deficiency. Sports nutrition guidance for people who train usually sits at about 1.4 to 2.0 g per kg, and muscle-building research suggests the benefit levels off around 1.6 g per kg, with up to about 2.2 g per kg covering nearly everyone. **Example:** a 70 kg person training moderately needs roughly 105 to 140 g a day.

2. Why Bodyweight Alone Fails at Higher Body Fat

Protein supports lean tissue, not stored fat

Muscle, organs, bone and skin are what protein maintains and repairs. Stored body fat needs very little. So as body fat rises, total bodyweight overstates how much protein you need. The fix is to base the number on **lean body mass** (everything that isn't fat) instead of the scale weight.

STEP	WHAT TO DO
Step 1: Estimate body fat %	Use a DEXA scan, a good body-composition scale, or skinfold measurements. All are approximate.
Step 2: Work out lean mass	Lean mass = bodyweight x (1 - body fat %). For 100 kg at 35% body fat: 100 x 0.65 = 65 kg.
Step 3: Multiply by an activity factor	Use the lean-mass table below. Round to a practical daily number.
Step 4: Cross-check	Protein per kg of your goal weight at about 1.4 to 2.0 g should land in a similar range.

ACTIVITY LEVEL	PROTEIN PER KG OF LEAN MASS
Low activity	1.6 - 2.0 g
Moderate activity	1.8 - 2.2 g
High activity / hard training	2.0 - 2.5 g

3. Four Profiles, Compared

The same "2 g per kg" rule gives very different answers

PROFILE	WEIGHT, BODY FAT, ACTIVITY	2 G x KG RULE	BETTER TARGET	HOW IT WAS WORKED OUT
Average person	70 kg, 20% body fat, moderate activity	140 g	105 - 140 g	Body fat is in a healthy range, so 1.5 to 2.0 g per kg of bodyweight works fine.
Higher body fat	100 kg, 35% body fat, low activity	200 g	105 - 130 g	Lean mass is about 65 kg. Calculated as 1.6 to 2.0 g per kg of lean mass.
Obese, very low activity	115 kg, 42% body fat, very low activity	230 g	105 - 135 g	Lean mass is about 67 kg. Same method: 1.6 to 2.0 g per kg of lean mass.
Heavy but muscular	100 kg, 15% body fat, hard training	200 g	170 - 210 g	Lean mass is about 85 kg, and 2.0 to 2.5 g per kg of lean mass is reasonable.

Takeaway: The 100 kg and 115 kg profiles with high body fat and low activity land at roughly 105 to 135 g, about half of what the bodyweight rule suggests. The heavy, muscular 100 kg person genuinely does need 170 g or more. Weight alone doesn't tell you which one you are, body composition and activity do.

4. Why Very High Intake Can Backfire

Especially with high body fat, low activity and a sudden jump

ISSUE	WHAT CAN HAPPEN
Digestive load	A lot of protein with little fibre or water can cause constipation, bloating and gas, especially if the increase is sudden.
Crowding out other foods	Protein-heavy plates push out vegetables, fruit and whole grains, so fibre drops just when it is needed most.
Large single servings and shakes	Big doses of whey concentrate (which contains lactose) or bars made with sugar alcohols often cause bloating and loose stools.
Diminishing returns, extra calories	Beyond roughly 2.2 g per kg, extra protein adds little muscle benefit, and protein still has 4 kcal per gram. 250 g of protein is 1,000 kcal, a big slice of a fat-loss calorie budget.
Kidneys and medical conditions	Research hasn't shown that high protein harms healthy kidneys. But anyone with kidney disease, or at risk of it, should only raise protein under medical advice.

5. Hitting Your Target Comfortably

Simple habits that keep digestion happy

TIP	WHY / HOW
Spread it across the day	Aim for 3 to 5 servings of roughly 25 to 40 g, rather than loading up one or two huge meals.
Build up gradually	Raise intake over 1 to 2 weeks so your gut can adjust, instead of jumping straight to the target.
Pair protein with fibre	Keep vegetables, fruit, dal or whole grains on the plate so digestion stays regular.
Drink enough water	More protein goes hand in hand with more fluids, which helps prevent constipation.
Whole foods first, shakes to fill gaps	Eggs, curd, paneer, dal, fish and chicken come with other nutrients. Use powder for the remainder.
Choose gut-friendly powders	If dairy bothers you, try whey isolate or a plant protein, and avoid bars heavy in sugar alcohols.
Take a short walk after meals	Light movement after eating supports digestion and comfort.

6. When to Check With a Professional

Some situations need individual advice, not a formula

SITUATION	WHAT TO DO
Kidney or liver disease	Protein targets need to be set by a doctor.
Diabetes with complications, pregnancy, or older age with frailty	Needs individualised guidance.
Ongoing bloating, pain, constipation or changes in bowel habits	Get checked rather than assuming it is only protein.

Note: These are general ranges used in sports nutrition, not a personal prescription. Body fat estimates from scales and calipers are approximate, so treat every figure as a starting point and adjust based on progress, hunger, digestion and training. Consult a doctor or registered dietitian for advice specific to you.