- Nutrition

5 foods that contain fibre and protein

Get perks like muscle maintenance, improved gut health and reduced risks of chronic conditions all in one bite

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NEW YORK – With protein hogging the spotlight lately, it may seem as if it is the main nutrient to focus on when it comes to good health. But fibre deserves attention too, nutrition experts say.



Most Americans, while eating plenty of protein, are not meeting fibre recommendations – which are 25g a day for women and 38g a day for men.

Few foods offer both nutrients, said Cheryl Anderson, a professor and dean of public health at the University of California, San Diego. Animal products that are high in protein, like beef, fish and chicken, often contain no fibre. And foods that are high in fibre, like fruit and vegetables, typically offer little protein.

The sweet-spot foods that contain both nutrients offer a nice one-two punch of benefits, Anderson said. Not only are they often satiating and inexpensive, she said, but you also get the protein perks, like muscle maintenance, and fibre perks, like improved gut health and reduced risks of chronic conditions, all in one bite.

You have only so many calories to play with each day, said Penny Kris-Etherton, a professor emeritus of nutrition sciences at Penn State. So incorporating fibre- and protein-rich foods can help you meet your nutrient needs without exceeding your calorie goals.

Here are five food groups that offer both.

Pulses – which are dried, edible seeds of the legume family – include chickpeas, lentils, dried peas and dried beans, like pinto, kidney and black beans. They top the list because of their relatively high protein and fibre levels.

A half-cup serving of cooked lentils, for instance, has about 9g of protein and 8g of fibre. The same amount of cooked black beans offers about 7.5g of each nutrient.

Research has found that people who regularly eat legumes tend to have a healthy body weight, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol level and reduced risk of chronic health conditions like

Type 2 diabetes.

One large review published in 2023 even found that for every extra 50g of legumes people ate each day, their risk of dying from any cause during the study periods decreased by 6 per cent.

Soya beans, like edamame, and many products made from them, such as tofu, soya milk and tempeh, are nearly perfect foods when it comes to their nutrition, said Walter Willett, a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

They contain generous amounts of protein as well as healthy fats, he said – including heart-healthy Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids.

A half-cup of shelled edamame packs about 9g of protein and 4g of fibre. Raw tofu has about 22g of protein and 3g of fibre a half-cup serving.

Unlike cow's milk, soya milk contains fibre. One cup of soya milk, for instance, provides 1.5g of fibre with 8g of protein.

Nuts are Willett's favourite fibreand protein-rich food. A 28g serving of peanuts, for instance, offers about 7.5g of protein and 2.5g of fibre. The same amount of almonds contains 6g of protein and 3.5g of fibre.

Eating nuts has been linked with numerous health benefits, Willett said, including a healthy body weight and reduced risks of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Nuts contain beneficial fats like monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which help improve cholesterol and make us feel full; vitamins and minerals, including B vitamins, magnesium and potassium; and the antioxidant vitamin E.

While seeds have similar health benefits to nuts – most notably in relation to heart health, Willett said – certain seeds, such as chia seeds and flaxseeds, tend to have more fibre and heart-healthy Omega-3 fatty acids.

Research suggests that regularly eating seeds can help support a healthy weight and healthy immune system and can help protect against inflammation, Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

A 28g serving of pumpkin seeds has about 8.5g of protein and 2g of fibre; the same amount of chia seeds has nearly 5g of protein and 10g of fibre.

A grain is considered whole when it contains all three parts of the original kernel – the bran, the endosperm and the germ.

Farro, brown rice, quinoa and oatmeal – as well as foods made from whole-grain flours, like whole-wheat bread and crackers – count as whole grains.

Whole grains have been tied to a wide range of health benefits, including better gut health and reduced risks of colorectal cancer, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Oatmeal made from a half-cup of rolled oats has about 6g of protein and 5g of fibre. A cup of cooked quinoa has about 8g of protein and 5g of fibre.