



Eating Well on Obesity Management Medications



Eating well helps protect your muscles, strength, and energy—especially if your appetite is lower while taking GLP-1 or other weight management medicines.

Why Protein and Fiber Matter

Protein helps keep your muscles strong, supports metabolism, and helps you feel steady and energized. Fiber helps to manage constipation, improve satiety, and support blood sugar control. Only plant-based proteins also contain fiber, so when appetite is low, choosing the most essential foods becomes even more important.

Whole-Food, Plant-Based Protein Options

Plant-based foods can support protein needs, especially when combined thoughtfully. However, when appetite and calorie intake are lower—as is common with GLP-1 medications—protein density, portion size, and fiber content matter.

Higher-Protein Plant Options (often most practical):

- Soy-based foods: tofu, tempeh, edamame
- Soy milk or fortified plant milks with added protein

These options provide more protein in smaller portions, which can be helpful when appetite is limited.

Moderate-Protein Plant Foods:

- Beans and lentils
- Quinoa and other whole grains

These foods are nutritious and supportive of overall health. They are high in fiber and may require larger volumes to meet protein needs when calories are limited.

High-Calorie Protein Sources:

- Nuts and seeds
- Nut butters

These foods contain healthy fats, nutrients, and protein. However, because they are calorie-dense and eaten in smaller portions, they may not provide enough protein on their own during GLP-1 therapy.

Animal-Based Protein Options (if included in your eating pattern)

- Fish (e.g., tuna, salmon, white fish)
- Poultry (e.g., chicken, turkey)
- Low-fat or fat-free dairy (e.g., Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, milk)

These options provide more protein in smaller portions, which can be especially helpful when appetite is low but are also higher in saturated fat.

Balancing Fiber Intake

Dietary fiber is found only in plant foods. Foods such as lentils, black beans, oats, berries, and avocado are excellent sources. Fiber helps you feel fuller after meals, and because GLP-1 medications slow digestion, many people naturally eat less.

At the same time, this can make it more challenging to meet protein needs—especially when relying heavily on high-fiber plant proteins.

If you are not used to eating a lot of high-fiber foods, remember to start low and go slow. Gradually increase intake and avoid overloading, particularly if you are experiencing gastrointestinal side effects, as increasing fiber too quickly can worsen symptoms. And remember to drink plenty of water.



Your care team can help you choose protein sources—or supplements—that fit your preferences, tolerance, and health needs.

1

START HERE

- Add ½ cup of beans or lentils to one meal
- Try tofu or edamame once this week
- Sprinkle nuts or seeds on oatmeal or salads
- Drink water regularly, even if you're not thirsty

2

BUILD FROM HERE

- Include a plant protein at most meals
- Eat smaller meals more often if you feel full quickly
- Choose whole foods more often than processed meat substitutes
- Use soups, bowls, or smoothies if chewing feels hard

3

PROGRESS WHEN READY

- Plan meals around beans, lentils, tofu, or tempeh
- Aim for protein at every meal, even if portions are small
- Prep simple foods ahead of time to reduce stress
- Work with a dietitian if eating enough feels difficult

IMPORTANT NOTE:

For patients who eat fully plant-based, it is common and appropriate to need a protein shake or supplement while taking GLP-1 medications. Appetite and total calorie intake are often too low to meet protein needs from whole foods alone.



Very Low Appetite or Nausea Days

Some days—especially after starting or increasing a dose—eating may feel hard. This is common and usually improves. Focus on gentle nourishment, not perfect meals.

What Helps:

- Eat tiny amounts every 2–3 hours
- Choose soft or liquid foods
- Protein first, even a few bites
- Sip fluids all day to avoid dehydration
- Use a timer—don't wait to feel hungry

Gentle Protein Ideas:



Silken or soft tofu



Lentil or bean soup



Smoothies with soy milk



Hummus with soft crackers



Mashed edamame



Call your care team if you cannot eat or drink for more than a day, feel dizzy or weak, or have ongoing vomiting or stomach pain.

