The best buys for your shopping list continued: The meat, fish and deli counters

Why is meat an important part of your diet? Meat, dairy products, nuts and certain grains and beans give our bodies protein. Protein is needed to build and maintain bones, muscles and skin.

One needs to eat protein every day because your body does not store it as your body stores fat or carbohydrate. There are all kinds of sources to receive the recommended daily allowance of protein. The average woman needs about 46 grams of protein a day and the average man needs about 56 grams of protein a day. A three-ounce portion of meat, about the size of a deck of cards, equals about 21 grams of protein.

Therefore, each gender probably will need to consume two to three servings of meat a day, depending on other protein sources they are taking in. These proteins are recommended to be “lean” proteins or proteins that do not have too much fat.

Here are some suggestions of what to buy to get the most nutritional “bang” for your buck.

For beef, choose eye, top and bottom round, sirloin, flank steak and 90-95 percent lean ground beef. You will get about 18 grams of protein per three-ounce serving and about six grams of fat.

Ribeye, porterhouse and T-bone steak, and 80 percent lean ground beef should be avoided because they have the highest fat-to-protein ratio. Three ounces of these meats pack 12-18 grams of fat.

Skinless chicken thighs and turkey legs are the best buys for poultry. Three ounces of thigh contains 18 grams of protein and three grams of fat, just one gram of fat more than breast meat. Turkey has the same protein-to-fat ratio as chicken thighs. Avoid ground turkey and enhanced chicken breast.

If the ground turkey includes the skin, it can have as much fat as ground beef. Three hundred milligrams of sodium is added when enhanced chicken is injected with saltwater to keep it moist.

In the pork section of your grocery store, choose pork tenderloin or boneless pork loin chops because, again, these cuts of meat contain three grams of fat and 18 grams of protein per three ounces of meat. Avoid pre-marinated cuts as they contain large amounts of sodium. Also, avoid pork blade chops because they have about 21 grams of fat per three ounces.

Rainbow trout, wild smoked salmon and mussels are great to eat two to three times a week. Rainbow trout is a less expensive choice to get heart-healthy, rich omega-3 fatty acids. Most U.S. rainbow trout is grown at inland farms using environmentally responsible production methods. Wild smoked salmon is another way to get inflammation-reducing omega-3s and brain-boosting vitamin B12. Farmed mussels have little toxin risk and are full of iron, vitamin B12 and selenium, an antioxidant.

Tilapia and sea scallops are good to eat two to three times a month. U.S. farmed tilapia is almost free of saturated fat and is protein-rich and inexpensive. However, this fish is somewhat high in omega-6 fats that promote inflammation in the body. Farmed bay scallops are the eco-wise option with abundant populations and a low risk of contamination.

From the “sliced and cured” section, turkey breast is almost fat-free and a good source of protein. A two-ounce serving of roast beef contains just three grams of fat, 110 calories and 19 grams of protein. Finally, one ounce of Canadian bacon contains about a third of calories of regular bacon and 11 fewer grams of fat.

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