

Mother Nurture

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Getting Enough Protein

What can I do to feel less run down in the afternoon? Maybe I need to eat differently, but I'm so busy here's a typical day: bagel and coffee for breakfast, salad for lunch, granola bar (or leftover peanut butter and jelly sandwich!) for a snack, and spaghetti for dinner.

In general, we recommend our daily Mother Nurture recipe, designed specifically with a mom's nutritional needs in mind. It's comprised of only seven ingredients. In sum, every day you should try to eat:

1. Eight to twelve ounces of protein
2. Five to seven servings of fresh vegetables, and one to two fruits
3. Unrefined oils and essential fatty acids instead of refined or hydrogenated oils, or trans-fatty acids
4. Two to five servings of unrefined, varied whole grains
5. Organic foods whenever possible
6. High potency nutritional supplements
7. Zero or very little refined sugar.

Nutrition is a huge subject, so if there's room here to make just one suggestion about your own diet, it would be this: *eat protein at every meal, especially in the morning*. That will even out the blood sugar crash we bet you're feeling in the afternoon, and give you energy throughout the day. For a busy mom, good sources of protein include:

- Eggs - If you're in a hurry, hard boil eggs in advance and eat one or two at breakfast.
- Fish - Salmon contains high levels of the essential fatty acids every mother needs. Besides eating it fresh, you can find salmon jerky in many health food stores. Try to minimize fish at the top of the ocean food chain – like tuna, shark, or swordfish – because mercury and other toxins increase as you move up the chain.
- Lean meat - For convenience, many health food stores sell different kinds of tasty “jerkies” made from beef or turkey, but without any nitrites.
- Nuts - Almonds are particularly high in protein; almond butter on a rice cake topped with apple slices is a delicious and healthy breakfast.

- Soy - You can add soybeans to stews or soups, or toss tofu chunks into your stirfry or casseroles. Try replacing half or more of the wheat flour with soy flour. Soymilk comes in many flavors, and you may be surprised to find that your children really like it.
- Hummus - This Middle Eastern food is made from garbanzo beans and sesame seeds. You can buy it in most supermarkets or make your own, lower-fat version.
- Protein shakes - If you are going to use these regularly, alternate types of protein powder (such as whey-, soy-, or egg-based) to get a good variety.
- Dairy products - Although milk, cheese, and yogurt are good sources of protein, they are best consumed in moderation because many people have an allergy to milk or cannot digest the lactose in it, and keeping the digestive tract in good shape is a top priority for a mother. If you have trouble with dairy, goat milk products may be tolerable.
- Combining vegetarian foods - If you're a vegetarian, you probably know about using food combinations (like rice and beans) for maximum protein. (Diet for a Small Planet or Laurel's Kitchen offer good introductions to this subject.) Since meat is the only significant source of iron and vitamin B12 in the diet, a vegetarian should usually take these as part of a daily supplement.

(Rick Hanson is a clinical psychologist, Jan Hanson is an acupuncturist/nutritionist, and they are raising a daughter and son, ages 11 and 14. With Ricki Pollycove, M.D., they are the authors of Mother Nurture: A Mother's Guide to Health in Body, Mind, and Intimate Relationships, published by Penguin. You can see their website at www.nurturemom.com or email them with questions or comments at info@nurturemom.com; unfortunately, a personal reply may not always be possible.)