



## Turkey Nutrition 101

### 13 Terrific Reasons to Love Turkey

**Turkey is tasty.** Let's face it, the number one reason we choose the foods we do is because of taste. Turkey definitely registers high on the tasty meter. Turkey also pairs perfectly with so many seasonings to create delicious cuisines from Thai to Indian to Italian.

Turkey is also a nutritional powerhouse! That's why we call turkey the '**power protein**'. Not only is turkey an excellent source of high quality protein, but also its lean and nutrient-rich (meaning it has a whole lot of nutrients per calorie).

Here are 13 terrific reasons to love turkey:

## 1. Turkey is packed with high quality **PROTEIN**.

Every bite of turkey is an excellent source of **high quality protein**, a nutrient that is key for overall good health; it plays an important role in building, maintaining and repairing your body every day. Protein is also used as fuel, or energy, especially when you don't get enough calories from carbohydrates or fat.

Aside from basic body functions, protein has some important health benefits (go to [canadianturkey.ca/nutrition](http://canadianturkey.ca/nutrition) and read the "All About Protein"), such as:

- **Protein is a muscle booster.** Protein helps build and maintain lean muscle mass to keep you strong.
- **Protein can help crush cravings.** Eating protein at meals can help you to feel satisfied and that can help you control your appetite and manage munchies.
- **Protein helps with weight management.** A high protein diet can promote muscle growth, calorie burning and satiety, all are important for achieving a healthy weight.

It's recommended that you aim for about 20 to 30 grams of protein at each meal to help you feel energized and satisfied, to build and maintain muscle, and to help manage a healthy weight.

Each 100-gram serving of turkey has about 30 grams of high quality protein; enjoying turkey at your meals is an easy and delicious way to help meet your protein needs.

## 2. White meat. Dark meat. Either way, turkey is **LEAN**.

Love dark turkey meat but go for white meat thinking it's a healthier choice? Here's some good news! All turkey is a healthy choice, but you'll be happy to know that dark turkey meat is **lean**, with just 8 grams of fat per a 100-gram serving. And, dark meat is especially rich in iron, selenium and zinc. Dark meat lovers rejoice!

As for those who love the white meat, it's considered a low fat choice. Each 100-gram serving of white turkey meat is **extra lean** with just 3 grams of fat.

### *White Turkey Meat*

#### Nutritional Information

Per 100 g

	Claim	Amount
Calories		163
Protein	Excellent source	32 g
Carbohydrate		0 g
Fat	Low fat, Extra lean	3.0 g
Cholesterol		82 mg
Sodium	Low sodium	51 mg
Potassium	Source	339 mg
Iron		0.4 mg
Phosphorus	Good source	234 mg
Magnesium	Source	20 mg
Zinc	Source	1.3 mg
Selenium	Good source	8.6 mcg
Vitamin B6	Good source	0.3 mg
Vitamin B12	Excellent source	1.0 mcg
*Niacin	Excellent source	18.2 NE

\*NE (niacin equivalent) is the unit used to express niacin content of food. It represents preformed niacin plus tryptophan equivalents.

Source: Health Canada, 2010.  
Canadian Nutrient File [on line]:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf).

### *Dark Turkey Meat*

#### Nutritional Information

Per 100 g

	Claim	Amount
Calories		196
Protein	Excellent source	29 g
Carbohydrate		0 g
Fat	Lean	7.9 g
Cholesterol		132 mg
Sodium	Low sodium	78 mg
Potassium	Source	283 mg
Iron	Source	1.0 mg
Phosphorus	Good source	203 mg
Magnesium	Source	16 mg
Zinc	Excellent source	3.2 mg
Selenium	Excellent source	19 mcg
Vitamin B6	Source	0.2 mg
Vitamin B12	Excellent source	2.0 mcg
*Niacin	Excellent source	11.8 NE

\*NE (niacin equivalent) is the unit used to express niacin content of food. It represents preformed niacin plus tryptophan equivalents.

Source: Health Canada, 2010.  
Canadian Nutrient File [on line]:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf).

***Tasty tip: Keep the skin on turkey breast while cooking keeps meat moist and locks in flavour; removing the skin before eating keeps turkey breast a lower fat option.***

What about ground turkey? It's also **extra lean** with just 8.7 grams of fat per 100-gram serving. Ground turkey has just over half the fat of lean ground beef, making turkey an ideal choice for your healthy barbecued burgers!

So as you see, all fresh turkey cuts (without the skin) are lean or extra lean; but they do contain a small amount of fat...and that's okay!

We need some fat for important functions in your body and for good health. For example:

- Fat provides energy.
- Fat is needed to build hormones and to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.
- We need fat for healthy skin.
- Fat also helps you feel satisfied after meals.

Most of the fat in turkey is monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. In fact, almost half the fat in turkey is monounsaturated – that's the same type of fat found in heart healthy olive oil!

*Ground Turkey Meat*

**Nutritional Information**

Per 100 g

	Claim	Amount
Calories		196
Protein	Excellent source	28 g
Carbohydrate		0 g
Fat	Extra lean	8.7 g
Cholesterol		127 mg
Sodium	Low sodium	84 mg
Potassium	Source	333 mg
Iron	Source	1.1 mg
Phosphorus	Excellent source	298 mg
Magnesium	Source	19 mg
Zinc	Excellent source	3.3 mg
Selenium	Good source	7.5 mcg
Vitamin B6	Source	0.1 mg
Vitamin B12	Excellent source	3.2 mcg
*Niacin	Excellent source	11.3 NE

\*NE (niacin equivalent) is the unit used to express niacin content of food. It represents preformed niacin plus tryptophan equivalents.

Source: Health Canada. 2010.  
Canadian Nutrient File [on line]:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cnf).

### 3. Turkey gives you a boost with energizing **IRON**.

Iron is a mineral that keeps your body's cells working properly, helps boost resistance to infection and helps your body to use energy. Iron delivers oxygen through your body to your muscles and your brain so you feel energized.

Although Popeye might be known for eating spinach to get his muscle-energizing iron, he should be pairing it with turkey!

That's because turkey contains a type of iron – heme iron – that is easily absorbed by your body. All cuts of turkey contain iron, but the dark meat is a bit higher in iron than white meat.

Plant foods, such as spinach, also contain iron – non-heme iron – but it's not as easily absorbable by your body. Eating meat, such as turkey, boosts the absorption of plant-based iron.

So, enjoying turkey on a spinach salad not only tastes great, but the turkey also helps your body to absorb the iron found in the leafy greens. Win-win!

### 4. Turkey builds up your body with immune-strengthening **ZINC**.

Think of the mineral zinc like your inner boxer; it's a key nutrient that helps your body fight off infections and heal wounds. All cuts of turkey will provide you with some body-boosting zinc, but ground turkey and dark turkey meat have the most; they are considered "excellent sources" of zinc. \*

You need zinc every day for good health:

- Zinc is vital for optimal growth and development.
- Zinc is good for your skin; it helps to heal wounds.
- Zinc is awesome for immunity: it helps build and strengthen your immune system.
- Zinc is needed to help you to taste and smell your food.

An added bonus: turkey contains zinc that your body can easily absorb. Although you can get zinc from plant foods (e.g. whole grains), your body absorbs the zinc found in animal foods, like turkey, more easily.

*\*per 100 gram serving*

## 5. Turkey is naturally low in SODIUM.

Sodium is a mineral that you've likely heard you need to reduce. While it's true, many of us get too much of it, we do need sodium to stay healthy.

Sodium helps regulate blood pressure and muscle and nerve activity. Although we need some sodium in our diet, too much can lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

All fresh cuts of turkey are low in sodium. Choosing more fresh foods, like turkey, that are naturally low in sodium, and cooking more meals at home, are two smart steps you can take for good health.

**Tasty tip:** Since turkey is so flavourful, you don't need to soak your bird in a salty marinade to make it tasty, like some other cuts of meat.

## 6. Turkey is bursting with VITAMIN B12.

Vitamin B12 is found naturally only in animal products, such as turkey, and is essential for vital functions in your body.

Vitamin B12:

- Keeps your nervous system – the body's electrical wiring – working well.
- Is needed for the development of your DNA and healthy red blood cells.

Vitamin B12 is a water-soluble vitamin, meaning that it's not stored in your body. You need to eat foods rich in vitamin B12 daily.

Turkey – all cuts – is an excellent source of vitamin B12.\* Since you need vitamin B12 every day, that's another great reason to eat turkey any day, not just holidays!

*\* per 100 gram serving*

## 7. Turkey is chockfull of NIACIN.

Niacin is a B vitamin, also known as vitamin B3. Like the other B vitamins, niacin is water-soluble, so it's not stored in your body; you need to eat foods containing niacin every day.

Here's why that's important:

- Niacin helps convert the food you eat into usable energy for your body.
- Niacin also helps maintain a healthy nervous system and plays a role in making DNA
- Niacin helps enzymes (natural chemicals in your body) to function properly.

Turkey – all cuts – is an excellent source of niacin.\*

*\* per 100 gram serving*

## 8. Turkey supplies SELENIUM for healthy skin.

Selenium is a mineral that loves your skin! Selenium works as an antioxidant that helps protect all your cells from damage and as such, plays a role in healthy skin.

Selenium is also needed to keep your immune system and your thyroid working at their best.

Selenium is also being studied for its role in prevention of cancer and for its potential in protecting age-related decline in brain function. Although more research is required, continuing to eat foods with selenium, such as turkey, is a smart choice.

All cuts of turkey provide selenium; dark meat is especially rich in selenium and is considered an "excellent source". \*

*\* per 100 gram serving*

## 9. Turkey delivers bone-building VITAMIN D.

Vitamin D is known as the sunshine vitamin. That's because your body can make vitamin D through exposure to sunlight on your skin. Vitamin D is found naturally in only a few foods – turkey being one of those foods.

One of the main roles of vitamin D is to partner with calcium to build and maintain strong and healthy bones and teeth. In fact, vitamin D recommendations increase for older adults (71years+) in order to help reduce risk for osteoporosis.

Vitamin D can also help you fight off infections as it plays an important role in keeping your immune system healthy.

Vitamin D is also being studied for its role in reduction of risk for certain cancers, such as colorectal cancer; however, more research is needed to understand that role.

Move over sunshine; many cuts of turkey are a source of Vitamin D!

## 10. Turkey provides you with heart healthy POTASSIUM.

When you think of potassium, what food comes to mind? If you said bananas, you're probably not alone. Bananas are known for being high in potassium. But, bananas aren't the only food that packs a good potassium punch. A serving of light turkey meat has the same amount of potassium as a small banana! \*

Potassium is an essential mineral that helps regulate fluid balance, heart function, blood pressure, and nerve and muscle activity.

You may have heard that reducing sodium is important to lowering blood pressure. Well, increasing intake of potassium is also important. That's because potassium counteracts sodium; a higher potassium intake can help reduce the amount of sodium that your body retains. And that can help to keep your blood pressure healthy.

All fresh cuts of turkey are low in sodium and a source of potassium, so eating turkey, as part of a healthy diet, is a good choice in keeping your blood pressure lower and your heart healthy.

\* 100 gram serving of light turkey meat has 364mg potassium; 1 small banana has 362 (Canadian Nutrient File, v2015).



## 11. Turkey has **MAGNESIUM** for healthy muscles and more!

Magnesium is an essential mineral that is involved in many processes in your body to keep you in good health.

Magnesium:

- Is important for healthy muscles, including your heart, and nerve function.
- Partners with calcium to keep your bones and teeth healthy and strong.
- Helps with blood sugar control.
- Helps to keep your blood pressure healthy.
- Is vital for producing energy for your body.

Turkey is a source of magnesium.

## 13. Turkey is filled with phosphorus.

Phosphorus is an essential mineral that works in many ways in your body:

- Phosphorus works with the B vitamins in helping your body to convert food into energy.
- Phosphorus helps your body to make the protein it needs for growth and maintenance of all your body's cells.
- Phosphorus is one of calcium's partners in building strong, healthy bones and teeth.

You get phosphorus in high amounts in protein-containing foods, such as turkey. In fact, turkey is a good or excellent source of phosphorus. \*

*\* per 100 gram serving*

## 14. TRYPTOPHAN in turkey does NOT make you sleepy!

Have you ever felt drowsy after eating a big turkey holiday dinner? Urban legend tells the tale that the sleepiness you feel is due to the tryptophan in turkey. That's a myth!

Here are the facts: Tryptophan is an amino acid found in small amounts in all protein foods, like turkey, milk and eggs. Tryptophan can act as a mild sleep-inducing agent, but it's most effective when it's on its own (e.g. in a pill). The small amount of tryptophan in foods, including turkey, doesn't have that same effect.

So what's the real culprit to post-meal drowsiness? It's more likely a combination of eating too much food and drinking alcohol.



[canadianturkey.ca/nutrition](http://canadianturkey.ca/nutrition)