3. Proteins

- Protein is a nutrient made up of elements carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen.
- These elements combine to form chemical substances called **amino acids**.
- There are EIGHT essential amino acids that our bodies need from food.

**Food Sources of Protein**
Meat, fish, poultry (domesticated birds that produce eggs), milk and milk products, nuts, chick peas, beans.

**Types of Proteins**

1. **Complete Proteins**: The proteins in animal foods such as meat, fish, chicken, eggs and milk contain all EIGHT ESSENTIAL AMINO ACIDS.

2. **Incomplete Proteins**: Plant proteins contain some, but usually not all, essential amino acids. Examples; baked beans, lentils.

**Why do we need Protein?**

- **Growth, maintenance and repair**: Protein is needed for the growth, maintenance and repair of every cell in the body. They are also needed for new tissue such as hair and nails.
- **As a secondary source of energy.**
- **Production of enzymes and hormones.**
- **Build and repair muscles.**

**How much protein do we need a day?**

Generally, teenagers need 2-3 serves of meat and meat alternatives and 2-3 serves of milk and milk products a day.