

# Healthier Eating



A well-balanced, healthy diet can help you have more energy, and help you lose weight or stay at a healthy weight. Eating well can also reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers. Try these tips for good nutrition:

## 1. Enjoy Your Food, But Eat Less

- Take the time to fully enjoy your food as you eat it.
- EAT SLOWLY. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to signal your brain that it's full. When we eat too quickly, we often overeat.

## 2. Focus on Fruits

- Fruits have important nutrients. Most fruits are also naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories.
- Try to include fruit in every meal. Here are a few ideas:
  - i) Breakfast: add bananas, mangoes, or strawberries to cereal, or oatmeal, or toast.
  - ii) Lunch: add grapes, an orange, or apples to eat with your lunch.
  - iii) Dinner: include orange sections, dried cranberries, or pears in a tossed salad.
- Instead of eating chips and cookies as snacks, try fruits and vegetables, like apples, kiwis, carrots, or green beans.

## 3. Add More Vegetables to Your Day

- Like fruits, most vegetables are high in nutrients and low in calories and fat.
- Fresh vegetables should make up about half of your meal. Frozen vegetables are also good.
- If you're eating out, ask for a side of vegetables or a salad instead of French fries.

## 4. Look for Fat-Free or Low-Fat Dairy Products

- Milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk have many good nutrients.
- Switch to nonfat or low-fat dairy products. They have fewer calories and fat.
- If you can't drink milk because you are lactose intolerant or have a lactose allergy, try lactose-free milk, soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, or coconut milk.

## 5. Make at Least Half Your Grains Whole

- "Grains" means any food made from wheat, rice, corn, or another cereal grain. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits are examples.
- Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel and are higher in protein and fiber. Eating whole grains as a part of your healthy diet can lower the risk of some chronic diseases.
- To make sure you are buying whole grain foods, look for products with a whole grain at the start of the ingredient list, like whole wheat, brown rice, oats, bulgur, corn, cornmeal, whole rye, quinoa, and buckwheat.
- Eat more whole grains by making simple switches.
  - i) Try brown rice with a meal instead of white rice.
  - ii) Use 100% whole wheat bread or a corn tortilla for your sandwich instead of white bread.

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## 6. Eat a Variety of Protein

- Protein foods can come from animals as well as plants.
  - i) Animal proteins include: meat, poultry, seafood, dairy, and eggs.
  - ii) Plant proteins include: beans, peas, soy products, nuts, and seeds.
- We all need protein but most Americans eat more than enough.
  - i) The average adult needs 5-7 ounces of protein foods per day.
  - ii) One “ounce of protein food” means:
    - (1) 1 ounce lean meat or seafood
    - (2) 1 egg
    - (3) ¼ cup cooked beans or peas
    - (4) 1 ounce nuts or seeds
    - (5) 1 Tablespoon peanut butter
- To make your protein intake healthier you can:
  - i) Eat lean meat and poultry (don’t eat the skin).
  - ii) Replace meat or poultry with fish twice a week.
  - iii) Eat more plant proteins like tofu, beans, peas, and nuts.

## 7. Build a Healthy Meal

- A healthy meal starts with more vegetables and fruits and less protein and grains.
- Make **half your plate** fruits and vegetables. The more colorful your plate is, the better.
- Have a glass of nonfat or low-fat milk on the side or include low-fat cheese or yogurt.
- Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way: eat fruit for dessert!
- Don’t forget to drink a lot of water.



## 8. Avoid/Limit Rich Foods and Fried Foods

- Desserts that are high in solid fats and added sugars and salt, such as cake, cookies, ice cream, and candy.
- High fat meats like bacon, ribs, sausages, and hot dogs.
- Sugary drinks like soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks. Drink water instead!
- Instead of frying, try baking, steaming, or roasting food.

## 9. Go Easy on the Salt

- Too much sodium can raise your risk of high blood pressure, which causes other health problems.
- You can lower the amount of sodium you eat by
  - (1) Cooking at home more often. By making food yourself you can control how much salt is used.
  - (2) Checking the nutrition label on your packaged and canned foods for “low sodium,” “reduced sodium,” or “no salt added.”

Source:

*“ChooseMyPlate.gov”*

US Department of Agriculture, [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

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