

# Healthy Eating

Following a healthy eating pattern may help you to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and live a long and productive life. It is important to follow a healthy eating pattern at an appropriate calorie level for your body. Your nutritional needs should be met primarily through food by choosing a variety of nutrient-rich foods.

## What are tips for following this plan?

### Reading food labels

- Read labels and choose the following:
  - Reduced or low sodium.
  - Juices with 100% fruit juice.
  - Foods with low saturated fats and high polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.
  - Foods with whole grains, such as whole wheat, cracked wheat, brown rice, and wild rice.
  - Whole grains that are fortified with folic acid. This is recommended for women who are pregnant or who want to become pregnant.
- Read labels and avoid the following:
  - Foods with a lot of added sugars. These include foods that contain brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, trehalose, or turbinado sugar.
    - **Do not** eat more than the following amounts of added sugar per day:
      - 6 teaspoons (25 g) for women.
      - 9 teaspoons (38 g) for men.
  - Foods that contain processed or refined starches and grains.
  - Refined grain products, such as white flour, degermed cornmeal, white bread, and white rice.

### Shopping

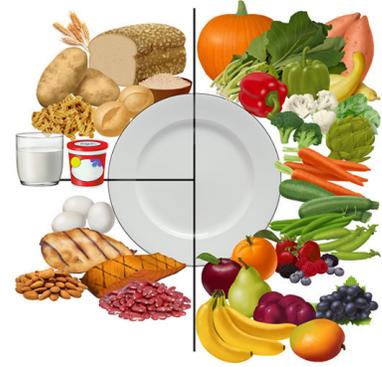
- Choose nutrient-rich snacks, such as vegetables, whole fruits, and nuts. Avoid high-calorie and high-sugar snacks, such as potato chips, fruit snacks, and candy.
- Use oil-based dressings and spreads on foods instead of solid fats such as butter, stick margarine, or cream cheese.
- Limit pre-made sauces, mixes, and "instant" products such as flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta.
- Try more plant-protein sources, such as tofu, tempeh, black beans, edamame, lentils, nuts, and seeds.
- Explore eating plans such as the Mediterranean diet or vegetarian diet.

### Cooking

- Use oil to sauté or stir-fry foods instead of solid fats such as butter, stick margarine, or lard.
- Try baking, boiling, grilling, or broiling instead of frying.
- Remove the fatty part of meats before cooking.
- Steam vegetables in water or broth.

## Meal planning

- At meals, imagine dividing your plate into fourths:
  - One-half of your plate is fruits and vegetables.
  - One-fourth of your plate is whole grains.
  - One-fourth of your plate is protein, especially lean meats, poultry, eggs, tofu, beans, or nuts.
- Include low-fat dairy as part of your daily diet.



## Lifestyle

- Choose healthy options in all settings, including home, work, school, restaurants, or stores.
- Prepare your food safely:
  - Wash your hands after handling raw meats.
  - Keep food preparation surfaces clean by regularly washing with hot, soapy water.
  - Keep raw meats separate from ready-to-eat foods, such as fruits and vegetables.
  - Cook seafood, meat, poultry, and eggs to the recommended internal temperature.
  - Store foods at safe temperatures. In general:
    - Keep cold foods at 40°F (4.4°C) or below.
    - Keep hot foods at 140°F (60°C) or above.
    - Keep your freezer at 0°F (-17.8°C) or below.
    - Foods are no longer safe to eat when they have been between the temperatures of 40°–140°F (4.4–60°C) for more than 2 hours.

## What foods should I eat?

### Fruits

Aim to eat 2 cup-equivalents of fresh, canned (in natural juice), or frozen fruits each day. Examples of 1 cup-equivalent of fruit include 1 small apple, 8 large strawberries, 1 cup canned fruit, ½ cup dried fruit, or 1 cup 100% juice.

### Vegetables

Aim to eat 2½–3 cup-equivalents of fresh and frozen vegetables each day, including different varieties and colors. Examples of 1 cup-equivalent of vegetables include 2 medium carrots, 2 cups raw, leafy greens, 1 cup chopped vegetable (raw or cooked), or 1 medium baked potato.

### Grains

Aim to eat 6 ounce-equivalents of whole grains each day. Examples of 1 ounce-equivalent of grains include 1 slice of bread, 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal, 3 cups popcorn, or ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal.

### Meats and other proteins

Aim to eat 5–6 ounce-equivalents of protein each day. Examples of 1 ounce-equivalent of protein include 1 egg, ½ cup nuts or seeds, or 1 tablespoon (16 g) peanut butter. A cut of meat or fish that is the size of a deck of cards is about 3–4 ounce-equivalents.

- Of the protein you eat each week, try to have at least 8 ounces come from seafood. This includes salmon, trout, herring, and anchovies.

## Dairy

Aim to eat 3 cup-equivalents of fat-free or low-fat dairy each day. Examples of 1 cup-equivalent of dairy include 1 cup (240 mL) milk, 8 ounces (250 g) yogurt, 1½ ounces (44 g) natural cheese, or 1 cup (240 mL) fortified soy milk.

## Fats and oils

- Aim for about 5 teaspoons (21 g) per day. Choose monounsaturated fats, such as canola and olive oils, avocados, peanut butter, and most nuts, or polyunsaturated fats, such as sunflower, corn, and soybean oils, walnuts, pine nuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, and flaxseed.

## Beverages

- Aim for six 8-oz glasses of water per day. Limit coffee to three to five 8-oz cups per day.
- Limit caffeinated beverages that have added calories, such as soda and energy drinks.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than 1 drink a day for nonpregnant women and 2 drinks a day for men. One drink equals 12 oz of beer (355 mL), 5 oz of wine (148 mL), or 1½ oz of hard liquor (44 mL).

## Seasoning and other foods

- Avoid adding excess amounts of salt to your foods. Try flavoring foods with herbs and spices instead of salt.
- Avoid adding sugar to foods.
- Try using oil-based dressings, sauces, and spreads instead of solid fats.

*This information is based on general U.S. nutrition guidelines. For more information, visit [choosemyplate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov). Exact amounts may vary based on your nutrition needs.*

## Summary

- A healthy eating plan may help you to maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and stay active throughout your life.
- Plan your meals. Make sure you eat the right portions of a variety of nutrient-rich foods.
- Try baking, boiling, grilling, or broiling instead of frying.
- Choose healthy options in all settings, including home, work, school, restaurants, or stores.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.