

Nutrition Fact Sheet

A Positive Approach: Choose Nutrient-Rich Foods for the Most Nutrition

What to eat or what not to eat? That's the question many of us struggle with every day. For decades nutrition advice has told us how to answer the question by telling us what foods and nutrients to avoid. As a result, most Americans are overweight yet undernourished.

It's time for a change in the way we think about food. By choosing nutrient-rich foods that provide the most nutrients per calorie, we can build healthier diets and start down a path of health and wellness.

The nutrient-rich foods way of eating emphasizes choosing foods based on their total nutrient package, including vitamins and minerals, instead of choosing foods based only on what they don't contain—saturated fat, sugar and salt. It offers a positive foundation to help you build overall healthier eating habits and meet personal nutrition needs over a lifetime.

Choosing nutrient-rich foods first is a positive and realistic way to think about eating and focuses on enjoying food instead of avoiding it. Because nutrient-rich foods are familiar, easy to find and represent the five basic food groups, achieving balance and building a healthier diet is simple and stress-free.

Selecting nutrient-rich foods and beverages first is a way to make better choices within your daily eating plan. Choose first among the basic food groups:

- Brightly-colored fruits and 100% fruit juice
- Vibrantly-colored vegetables and potatoes
- Whole, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods
- Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt
- Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

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Here are some additional practical tips for you to add nutrient-rich foods and beverages to your daily diet:

- Make a creamier oatmeal by adding fat-free milk instead of water. Mix in some raisins, dried cranberries, cherries or blueberries, too.
- Create sandwiches on whole grain bread such as whole wheat or whole rye. Add slices of avocado, tomato or cucumber. Choose sandwich fillings such as lean roast beef, ham, turkey, or chicken.
- Try whole wheat macaroni in macaroni and cheese—a great way to enjoy a whole grain food with a serving of dairy.
- When eating out, look for nutrient-rich choices such as entrée salads with grilled seafood and low-calorie dressing, baked potatoes topped with salsa, grilled vegetables and reduced-fat cheese and yogurt parfaits made with strawberries and blueberries.
- Choose nutrient-rich beverages such as low-fat or fat-free plain or flavored milk or 100% fruit juice.
- Savor the first few bites of any dish. Top foods with chopped nuts or reduced-fat shredded sharp cheese to get crunch, flavor and nutrients in every bite.
- Spend a few minutes to cut and bag veggies to increase nutrients in the diet of every family member. Try some ready-to-eat favorites like red, green or yellow peppers, broccoli or cauliflower flowerets, carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers, snap peas or whole radishes. Keep cut vegetables handy to use as mid-afternoon snacks, side dishes, lunch box additions or as a quick nibble while waiting for dinner.
- Serve meals that pack multiple nutrient-rich foods into one dish - like hearty, broth-based soups that are full of colorful vegetables, beans and lean meat. Try chili with a dollop of low-fat yogurt. Serve these with whole grain breads or rolls.
- For dessert, enjoy a tropical treat by blending mango, plain low-fat milk, ice and a splash of pineapple juice. Stir chocolate syrup into a cup of coffee-flavored yogurt, freeze and enjoy.

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org



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