

Immune Boosting Nutrients

Although nutrition will not prevent or cure the current COVID-19 illness, it's still important to consume nutrients to keep immune systems strong. With all the stress and anxiety surrounding the pandemic, immune systems may weaken and put the body at risk for developing or worsening chronic diseases. Some nutrients offer immune-boosting properties that will keep the body healthy during this stressful time:

- Beta-carotene: This powerful antioxidant boosts immune health by preventing damage to cells. You can find it in sweet potatoes, spinach, carrots, mango, broccoli and tomatoes.
- Vitamin C: Another strong antioxidant, this vitamin can be found in citrus fruits, berries, melons, tomatoes, bell peppers and broccoli.
- Vitamin D: Low levels of this vitamin have been associated with increased risk of infection and inflammatory diseases. It is best absorbed from getting direct sunlight but is also found in fatty fish, eggs, and milk or 100% juices that are fortified with vitamin D.
- Zinc: This mineral supports the growth of the body's immune cells. It is better absorbed from animal sources such as beef and seafood but is also found in vegetarian sources such as wheat germ, beans, nuts and tofu.
- Probiotics: These "good bacteria " have many health benefits but are known to fight against pathogens. Good sources of probiotics include cultured dairy products such as yogurt or kefir, and fermented foods such as kimchi or sauerkraut.
- Protein: This macronutrient is vital to build and repair body tissue and fights viral and bacterial infections. Protein is found in milk, yogurt, eggs, beef, chicken, seafood, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.

Eating a healthy and balanced diet, getting in physical activity (even just a few minutes a day), sleeping at least 7 hours a night, and managing stress are all encouraged to strengthen the immune system. Focus on eating nutrient-dense foods, especially those listed above, to keep your body strong during this stressful time.

Build A Fresh & Flavorful Salad

What better way to celebrate the coming of spring than with crisp, fresh, and colorful salads? Swish chard, cabbage, red and green lettuce, spinach, collard greens, kale, and so much more, are now in season! Check out the website seasonalfoodguide.org for a complete list of spring produce. Adding color to your plate can boost your immune system, support a healthy gut, regulate blood sugar, lower cholesterol, hydrate your body, and enhance brain health. It's time to start eating these refreshing, healthy foods and creating your own salad will do just the trick.

Build a tasteful, spring salad with 5 simple steps:

1. Select a leafy green: For a lighter flavor choose green or red leaf lettuce, mixed greens, spinach, or romaine lettuce. For a bolder flavor try kale, radicchio, cabbage, or arugula.
2. Add some color with fruits and veggies: Chopped, diced, shredded, sliced, or whole, you choose! You can even add fresh, frozen, canned, or dried versions. The key is to focus on incorporating a variety of colors. Each color has a different vitamin, mineral, antioxidant, and phytochemical profile, giving you a variety of nutrients.
3. Sprinkle on the extras: Add on some cheese (feta, bleu, parmesan) and/or healthy fats (nuts, seeds, avocado, olives) to boost flavor and healthy fat intake. By having some healthy fats added to your salad, it makes it easier for your body to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K that are necessary for your health.
4. Power it up with protein: Make it a main course meal by adding beans, legumes, chicken, shrimp, tofu, hard-boiled eggs, tuna, salmon, or turkey.
5. Make your own salad dressing: Jazz up your salad with fun flavors from oil, vinegars, spices, fresh herbs, a spritz of citrus juice, or diced onions and garlic. Looking for a great recipe? Whisk together 1/4 cup olive oil, 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar and 1/4 teaspoon ground mustard. Add a dash or two of black pepper and toss into your salad!

Try these recommended combinations to get started with building your spring salads:

- Romaine, grape tomatoes, cucumber, shredded carrots, avocado, and shrimp.
- Spinach, red onion, mandarin oranges, and sliced almonds.
- Mixed greens, grilled chicken strips, dried cranberries, walnuts, and feta cheese.

Tomato Broccoli Frittata



Perfect for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, this immune-boosting recipe is packed with protein, beta-carotene, vitamins C & D, and zinc. Serves 4.

Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 cups small broccoli florets
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 ¼ cups cherry tomatoes, quartered

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, salt, and pepper. Stir in feta cheese; set aside.
2. In a large skillet, heat oil until warm. Saute broccoli and shallots over medium heat for 8-10 minutes (or until tender). Add in tomatoes, then remove from heat and add to a greased 8x8 casserole dish. Pour egg mixture over broccoli mixture.
3. Bake for 20 min. or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

Rainbow Layered Salad



Ingredients

1 pint red grape or cherry tomatoes, quartered
1 cup shredded carrots
1 cup frozen corn kernels
2 avocados, pitted and sliced into thin wedges
1 cup thinly sliced red cabbage
1 cup crushed blue corn chips
Juice of 1 lime
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup olive oil
½ teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Directions

In a clear glass serving bowl, layer the tomatoes, carrots, frozen corn, avocados, red cabbage and blue corn chips in order. Let stand at least 15 minutes for corn to fully defrost. Make salad dressing by whisking together lime juice, lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Serve dressing on the side or spread evenly over salad.

*Recipe from eatright.org:

<https://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/recipes/rainbow-layered-salad-recipe>

Cheers to Drinking More Water

The sun is out and as temperatures are rising, so is the body's need for more water. Unlike food, we cannot survive long without water. It is required to keep the heart pumping, blood circulating, and digestion system moving. The body is made up of about 60% water and is required for every cell, organ, and tissue to function properly. Proper hydration aids in weight loss, helps brighten skin, relieves joint pain, improves energy, and may even reduce brain fog and improve mood.

How much is enough? It's simple: take your weight in pounds and divide by 2, this equals how many fluid ounces you should drink in a day. If you have serious medical conditions your hydration needs may vary, so make sure to reach out to your physician or registered dietitian to discuss individualized needs. Here are a few tips to keep yourself hydrated:

1. Invest in a water bottle and keep it with you during the day. It is best to sip every hour rather than guzzle a large volume.
2. Boost the flavor of your water by infusing it with fruit and/or herbs.
 - a. Common fruits used to infuse water include melons, berries, and citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, or limes.
 - b. Popular herbs to use are basil, rosemary, thyme, oregano, or mint.
 - c. Great combinations include strawberry and mint, orange and basil, or lemon and rosemary. Simply add the fruit and/or herbs to a pitcher of cold water or straight into your water bottle and let infuse for 1-2 hours.
3. Sip on hot or cold herbal tea. Great herbal teas include hibiscus, ginger, mint, or chamomile.
4. Try a no-sugar-added sparkling water. Some brand examples of these include La Croix, Bubbly, or Izzie. If the flavor is too bitter, try adding a wedge of lemon, lime, or orange to add sweeter flavor.

3 Infused Water Recipes

Combinations:

Strawberry, Basil and Lemon:

1/2 cup strawberries stemmed and sliced, fresh or frozen
5 large fresh basil leaves torn
1 lemon thinly sliced

Honeydew, Cucumber, and Mint:

1/2 cup honeydew cubes
1 cucumber thinly sliced
10 fresh mint leaves torn

Blueberry, Lemon, and Rosemary:

1/2 pint blueberries
1 lemon thinly sliced
4 sprigs fresh rosemary

Directions:

1. In a large pitcher, add the desired combination of fruit and herbs.
2. Add 5 cups of water and 1 cup ice (optional). Add additional fruit or herbs to garnish, if desired. Let steep for about 1 hour.

5 Tips: Eat More Fish & Seafood

Fish and seafood provide a wide range of health benefits. They are high in protein, healthy fats (especially omega-3 fats), B-complex vitamins, vitamins A and D, selenium, zinc, iodine, and iron. This combination of nutrients has been shown to boost heart health by lowering cholesterol and triglycerides, improves circulation, enhances brain health, contributes to good eye and vision health, and even helps to build muscle and tissues in the body. To receive the maximum benefit, it's recommended to eat fish and seafood two times per week. Here are 5 tips on how to easily accomplish this goal and improve your overall health:

1. **Get creative with your recipes:** Think beyond eating a fillet. Try salmon burgers, shrimp tacos, or clams with whole wheat pasta. Try a new type of fish such as mackerel, herring, or pollock. Top a salad with grilled scallops or use canned tuna or salmon on your sandwich instead of deli meats.
2. **Shop smart:** Eating more fish and seafood does not have to be expensive. Purchase frozen or canned options, and be sure to check the stores for coupons, sales, and specials.
3. **Eat a variety:** Try a new fish or seafood option often and include some that are higher in omega-3 fats such as salmon, trout, oysters, mackerel, herring, and sardines.
4. **Keep it lean & flavorful:** Spices and herbs such as dill, chili powder, paprika, or cumin, and lemon or lime juice, can add great flavor to fish and seafood without adding too much sodium. Try grilling, broiling, roasting, or baking options to keep it lean.
5. **Add shellfish to the list:** Oysters, mussels, clams, and calamari all supply healthy omega-3 fats as well. Try oyster stew, steamed clams, and mussels or calamari with marinara over pasta.

Shrimp Tacos w/Cilantro Avocado Slaw

Source: slenderkitchen.com

Serves: 4, Serving size: 2 tacos

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lbs. Shrimp
- 1 tsp. Chipotle chili powder
- 1 tsp. Salt
- ½ tsp. Paprika
- ½ tsp. Oregano
- ¼ tsp. Coriander
- 1 tsp. Olive oil
- 2 cups coleslaw mix
- 1 small avocado, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 3 tbsp. Lime juice
- ½ tsp. Cumin
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 8 corn tortillas



Directions:

1. Toss the shrimp with chili powder, salt, paprika, oregano, and coriander. Set aside.
2. In a separate bowl toss together coleslaw, cilantro, and green onions. Season with salt, pepper, and cumin. Add lime juice and gently massage with your hands to soften the cabbage. Add avocado and toss with mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.
3. Heat olive oil over medium high heat. Add the shrimp and cook for 2-3 minutes per side until pink and opaque.
4. Heat tortillas on a grill or stove top. Stuff with cooked shrimp and top with avocado slaw. Enjoy!

Boost Energy with Food

Do you find your energy crashing mid-day or after lunch? Many reasons such as lack of sleep or physical activity, age, or hormone imbalances are common factors to the afternoon slump, but your diet may also be the culprit. Eating balanced amounts of nutrients, drinking water, and snacking on the right foods will help stabilize blood sugar and reduce energy dips and spikes. Check out these tips to ensure your energy levels are sustained:

1. Eat more protein at breakfast

Research suggests those who ate 30 grams of protein at breakfast had better satiety throughout the day, ate less snacks, and had more energy. High protein breakfast items include eggs, lean breakfast meats such as ham or chicken and turkey sausage, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, beans, and oatmeal made with low-fat milk.

2. Sip on water

One of the most common signs of underhydration is fatigue. On busy days we often forget to drink water. Make it a point to sip on some H₂O. Carry a water bottle with you when you are out and sip a few times every hour.

3. Balance your lunch

Balance your lunch with protein, dairy, whole grains, vegetables, and fruit. Great examples of this balance include:

- Salad with mixed greens, tuna or chicken, berries, walnuts, and feta cheese.
- Whole wheat pita pockets stuffed with hummus, lettuce, tomato, onion, and feta.
- Burrito bowl with brown rice, black beans, salsa, avocado, peppers, and shredded cheese.

4. Snack on nuts

If you feel the need to snack, a handful of nuts (about ¼ cup) will help balance blood sugar, curb hunger, and enhance mental focus. Great choices include pistachios, almonds, walnuts, pecans, peanuts, & cashews.

Protein-Packed Banana Chia Oatmeal

Oats are a great way to get your protein. One cup cooked has about 10 grams of protein. Made with milk, you have closer to 20 grams of protein. Add nuts, nut butter, chia seeds, Greek yogurt, or even protein powder, and you have your 30 grams of recommended protein at breakfast!



Ingredients:

- ½ cup rolled oats
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 tsp. Maple syrup or honey (to sweeten)
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp. chia seeds
- 1 banana, sliced
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon

Directions:

1. Heat oats and low-fat milk in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until oats are cooked, about 2-3 minutes.
2. Take off heat and let cool for about 2 minutes.
3. Stir in maple syrup or honey and Greek yogurt.
4. Top with chia seeds, sliced banana, and cinnamon.

Live Long with Good Fats

For many years, eating less fat has been a focus for optimal health. We now know our bodies need fat to function properly. Fat is essential for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K, plays a key role in producing important hormones, and supports healthy cell growth, brain development, and nervous system function. However, it is important to note the types of fat consumed matters. For optimal health, focus on eating more monounsaturated and omega-3 fats. Here is a breakdown of the different fats:

- **Monounsaturated fats:** Found in nuts and seeds, and avocado, olive, peanut, and canola oils. This type of fat has been found to help regulate blood sugar levels, lower blood pressure, and reduce “bad” LDL cholesterol.
- **Polyunsaturated fats:** Include omega-3 and omega-6 fats.
 - Omega-3s: Best sources include salmon, tuna, trout, sardines, canola oil, flaxseeds, walnuts, and tofu. Meet this recommendation by eating fish twice a week and plant sources every day.
 - Omega-6s: Found in plant oils - corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean, cotton seed, and sesame oils. Excess intake is associated with inflammation and linked to heart disease, so it is best to consume these in moderation even though they are essential for our bodies to have.
- **Saturated fats:** Found in butter, cheese, whole milk, egg yolks, meats, coconut, and palm oils. Although saturated fat has gained some popularity in the past few years, it is still important to consume in moderation because excess intake could lead to heart disease.
- **Trans fats:** Found in margarine, shortening, and processed food products, these can raise “bad” LDL cholesterol and may even develop Type 2 Diabetes. Even though it has been used less by food manufacturers, there may still be some traces in our food. The best way to make sure your food product has no trans-fat is to read the “ingredients” section and avoid foods with *hydrogenated* or *partially hydrogenated oils*.

Avocado Tuna Salad

Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 2 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 5-ounce can tuna
- 1/2 ripe avocado, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup minced celery
- 1/4 cup minced red onion
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper



Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix with a fork, mashing the avocado and breaking up the chunks of tuna as you go, until the ingredients are well combined.
2. Finish and serve by adding more oil or salt and pepper if necessary. Serve on your favorite sandwich bread or toast.

Fall is well on its way, and so are many recipes we save until the leaves start to change color and the weather cools down. Chili, soups, stews, warm drinks, you name it! Not to mention the plethora of in-season fall produce including squash, pumpkin, apples, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, ginger, grapes, sweet potatoes, swiss chard, and turnips. Get ahead of the game and start planning your fall meals using these fun, flavorful fall menu tips:

- **Use pumpkin for more than just a sweet treat.** Pumpkin is an incredibly healthy and delicious vegetable. It is packed with fiber, vitamins A, C, and K, potassium, and a powerful antioxidant called beta-carotene. We generally think of pumpkin in pie, coffee, or sweet bread form. However, it makes a great companion in our savory dishes too. See the recipe below for a Pumpkin Chili that is flavorful and packed with nutrition.
- **Reach for broth or veggie-based instead of heavy cream soups.** There is nothing more satisfying than a warm bowl of soup on a brisk autumn day. Pack your soups full of autumn harvest such as sweet potatoes, swiss chard, turnips, carrots, or squash. Add some fall flavors from ground or fresh grated ginger or allspice.
- **Flavor your dishes with fall spices.** Here are spices that pair well with the following:
 - Allspice: Stews, carrots, pork or poultry, squash, and breads
 - Cardamom: Poultry, red meat, lentils, oranges, and rice dishes
 - Cinnamon: Stews, curries, fruit, squash, oatmeal, pork and beef
 - Cloves: Sweet breads, carrots, onions, potatoes, chocolate and fruit
 - Ginger: Stir-fry, curries, hot tea, and seafood; also pairs well with garlic
 - Nutmeg: Baked goods, oatmeal, white sauces, spinach and squash
 - Rosemary: Chicken, lamb, pork, fish, grains, mushrooms, and potatoes

Enjoy a flavorful fall and start experimenting with new recipes, spices, and fun flavors!

Powerful Pumpkin Chili

Serves: 6

Top with chopped avocado, cilantro, shredded cheese, or whole grain crackers. Enjoy!



Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp avocado oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion (about 1 small)
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. 90% lean ground beef
- 1, 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1, 15 oz. can pumpkin puree
- 1, 15 oz. can kidney beans, rinsed
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- Optional: 1/2 tsp. or less of cayenne pepper

Directions:

1. Sauté onions and garlic in oil over medium heat in a large pot. Add in ground beef and cook completely.
2. Add all remaining ingredients and stir together.
3. Let simmer on medium-low heat for 10-12 minutes with lid on.

Brain Boosting Nutrients

Your brain has a big job. It is essentially the command center for your entire body. If you have a healthy, happy brain, it can do its job well and keep the body working properly. Just like a car that needs fuel to drive, your brain needs specific nutrients to support its energy and functions. Here are some important nutrients and spices to help improve memory, boost mood, and keep your brain sharp and attentive:

1. **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Omega-3 fatty acids have long been shown to improve cognition, memory, and depression. They help build brain cells and prevent inflammation from damaging the brain. Small, cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring, or anchovies are packed with these healthy fats. Eating fish just twice a week will help you build a better brain. You can also get some omega-3 fats from chia, flax, or pumpkin seeds, and walnuts.
2. **Antioxidants:** Dark chocolate, berries, tart cherries or juice, green leafy vegetables, and citrus fruits are a few to name that are full of antioxidants. Studies suggest eating high antioxidant foods every day can help reverse cell damage in the brain and slow down aging, especially memory loss.
3. **Turmeric & Sage:** Sage inhibits the breakdown of acetylcholine, a chemical crucial for memory and thinking. Turmeric contains a compound called curcumin, which has anti-inflammatory properties that help preserve brain cells. Get a daily brain boost by sprinkling sage or turmeric on your favorite veggies, poultry, rice, or bean dishes.
4. **Unsaturated Fats:** Avocado is a perfect unsaturated fat to add to your daily brain foods list. These healthy fats help with proper blood flow and support nerves in the brain. Add avocado to smoothies, toast, salads, sandwiches, or eat plain with a little salt and pepper. Nuts and seeds are also rich in unsaturated fats.

There are many foods and spices that promote good brain health. To keep your brain working well, eat fish two times a week, get a variety of fruits and veggies every day, snack on nuts and seeds, and add turmeric or sage to your favorite dishes.

Brain Boosting Trail Mix

A perfect and easy snack full of healthy fats, antioxidants, and other brain-boosting nutrients.

Serving size: $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup serving

Serves: 10-12

Ingredients:

- 1 cup walnuts, halved
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pumpkin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup almonds, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried tart cherries or blueberries
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dark chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded coconut (optional)

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients together. Add to a container to keep on-hand when needing a quick, brain-boosting snack.

Make it your own by swapping out nuts and seeds. Walnuts, cashews, almonds, peanuts, brazil nuts, pecans, chia seeds, flaxseed, or sunflower seeds are great choices. For dried fruit, unsweetened dried cherries, blueberries, strawberries, or cranberries are perfect for this recipe.



Be Heart Smart

February kicks off with American Heart Month to honor the importance of keeping a healthy heart. Living a heart-healthy lifestyle can largely reduce risk of developing heart disease, including coronary heart disease, which is the most common type. By taking preventive measures, you can lower your risk and improve your overall health and well-being!

Here is a quick overview of a heart-healthy diet and foods to incorporate into your daily routine:

1. **Fiber:** Fiber is a carbohydrate the body cannot digest and is found in plant foods - vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, and legumes. It comes in two forms, soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber is especially helpful for reducing cholesterol and balancing blood sugar. Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, kale, broccoli, oranges, berries, oats, wild rice, black beans, lentils, and quinoa are great choices to focus on.
2. **Healthy Fats:** Helpful for reducing inflammation and improving circulation, healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats are very beneficial for heart health. Nuts, seeds, plant oils, and fish are high in heart-healthy fats. Walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, avocados, salmon, tuna, and olive oil are a few to name.
3. **Antioxidants:** Tomatoes are rich in a powerful antioxidant called lycopene, which has been shown to reduce cholesterol, improve blood flow, and reduce inflammation. Berries are also extremely high in antioxidants and fiber, and have been shown to lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and inflammation. Slice a fresh tomato and drizzle with olive oil and balsamic vinegar for a tasty side dish, or snack on a bowl of fresh berries.
4. **Herbs & Spices:** Consuming less salt is greatly beneficial for heart health. Reducing salt intake doesn't have to be flavorless! Use more herbs and spices and less salt to flavor food. Oregano, turmeric, cinnamon, cloves, cayenne pepper, garlic, and ginger are a few heart-boosting herbs and spices to incorporate into your daily routine.

Eating a heart-healthy diet, exercising, managing stress, getting quality sleep, and not smoking are all helpful and preventive measures that can reduce your chances of developing heart disease. Happy Heart Health!

Easy One-Pan Salmon, Asparagus, & Sweet Potato



Serves: 2

Ingredients:

- 2, 4 oz fillet salmon
- 1 bunch asparagus, hard ends cut off
- 2 sweet potatoes, cubed
- ½ lemon, sliced
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil, divided
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 1 dash salt
- 1 dash pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.
3. Toss cut sweet potatoes with half of the olive oil and add salt/pepper to taste. Line evenly on the baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes.
4. While the sweet potatoes are cooking, prepare asparagus by tossing in remaining olive oil & garlic powder, & salt/pepper to taste. Sprinkle salmon with salt/pepper, drizzle with olive oil, and top with two slices of lemon.
5. When sweet potatoes are done baking, move to one side of the baking sheet. Line asparagus in an even layer over the bottom of the baking sheet then top with salmon fillets. Bake for 10 minutes or until salmon is flakey.

Personalize Your Plate

There is no one size fits all approach to nutrition! Everyone has their own likes and dislikes, beliefs, cultures, routines, and personal health goals. In March we celebrate National Nutrition Month to invite everyone to learn about healthful eating patterns. The theme this year, Personalize Your Plate, promotes creating nutritious meals to meet individual cultural and personal food preferences, while following the advice from the dietary guidelines. Here are a few tips on how you can practice this:

1. **Eat veggies and fruit that you enjoy.** Are you more likely to eat a salad when you don't like lettuce, or are you more likely to eat some carrot sticks dipped in dressing that you enjoy? Choosing your favorites helps you eat and enjoy these nutritious foods more often. The good news is not one veggie or fruit is better than the other, they are all healthy! Save time and money by using frozen or canned varieties. They provide just as many nutrients as fresh but can save you prep time and money. Rinse canned produce to rid excess salt and sugar.
2. **Experiment with whole grains.** If you are not a big fan of whole grain bread, that's okay! You can use other types of whole grains to meet the recommendation of eating at least 50% whole grains throughout the week. Oatmeal, barley, couscous, brown or wild rice, quinoa, and bran are a few great whole grain choices. They even have microwavable brown rice and quinoa, which helps save time prepping but adds a nutritious boost to your meals!
3. **Vary your lean proteins.** If you are stuck in the rut of eating the same proteins over and over, vary your choices. There are ample lean protein options to choose from including beans, peas, legumes, canned tuna or salmon, or lean beef, turkey, chicken, and pork varieties. Consider adding beans and legumes to your favorite meat dishes, like kidney beans to beef chili or lentils to taco meat. The possibilities are endless!
4. **Don't forget about dairy.** Calcium and vitamin D are essential to maintain bone health and develop a healthy immune system. Meet the "3 servings of dairy per day" recommendation by incorporating milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage or ricotta cheese, and even soy or almond milk alternatives. If you aren't big into drinking milk, you have plenty of options to meet this recommendation!

Fill half your plate with your favorite veggies and fruit, choose whole grains at least half the time, vary your protein, and don't forget to add a dairy serving to your meals. Personalize these recommendations by choosing foods you enjoy – after all, we are all different in what we like eating!

Beef & Lentil Tacos

Serves: 5

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cooked green lentils (can use canned lentils)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced onion
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon onion powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon paprika
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- 1 tablespoon oil, for cooking
- 10 whole grain tortillas
- Toppings: cheese, tomatoes, avocado, salsa



Directions:

1. In a skillet over medium heat, sauté the onion in oil until slightly brown, about 2 minutes.
2. Add ground beef and sauté with onions until meat is browned completely.
3. Add lentils, seasonings, and water to meat. Simmer on medium-low for 10 minutes or until tacos have thickened.
4. Serve on whole wheat tortillas and top with cheese, fresh tomatoes, avocado, or salsa.

Tips:

Use a taco seasoning packet in place of seasonings if desired. Can also substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water with a can of diced tomatoes for extra flavor and nutrition.

Soak Up Your Vitamin D

Did you know around 40% of people in the United States are deficient in vitamin D? There are so many explanations behind this. Lack of sun exposure, not eating enough vitamin D-rich foods, or not eating enough healthy fats to absorb vitamin D are a few key explanations.

Vitamin D functions in the body as both a potent vitamin and hormone. Its main role is to help absorb calcium and maintain balance of calcium and phosphorus in the body, which helps to build strong bones. However, this versatile vitamin also supports a healthy immune system, improves mood, and has even shown to reduce risk of cancer and autoimmune diseases.

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin, which means healthy fats must be present for it to be properly absorbed. The best way to get enough vitamin D is to soak up some sunshine! You can also get vitamin D from certain foods, such as salmon, eggs, dairy foods, tuna, and fortified orange juice or cereals. If you experience muscle weakness, bone pain, or depression and mood issues, talk to your doctor about getting your vitamin D levels checked.

Here are some easy ways to ensure your vitamin D levels stay balanced:

1. Eat fish at least twice a week. Make a tasty tuna melt, cook halibut with taco seasoning to make fish tacos, or sauté some salmon with balsamic vinegar, olive oil, and your favorite veggies for a quick dinner option.
2. Make a breakfast scramble with eggs, veggies, & cheese. Sip a small glass of vitamin D-fortified orange juice with it.
3. Get outside! Take a walk or sit outside for 10-30 minutes every day. It's best to wear sunscreen, especially as spring and summer quickly approach to prevent UV damage on your skin.

Get your levels tested, especially if you are experiencing any symptoms of low vitamin D. Supplement dosage varies based on person and severity of deficiency. If you are deficient, your doctor can recommend the proper dosage for you!

D-lightful Breakfast Omelet

Serves: 1

Both eggs & mushrooms are rich in vitamin D. Eat this tasty omelet with a side of vitamin D-fortified orange juice or milk.

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped mushrooms
- ¼ cup chopped spinach
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- ¼ tsp cumin
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tbsp shredded cheese

Directions:

1. Heat olive oil in a pan. Sauté chopped mushrooms, spinach, and onions for 5 minutes, until softened. Set aside on a plate.
2. Whisk eggs with milk, salt, pepper, and cumin in a bowl. Pour egg mixture into the same pan over medium heat. Let cook about 1-2 minutes, until bottom appears to be less runny.
3. Add veggie mixture to omelet, then top with cheese. Fold omelet in half, cooking on both sides until the omelet is cooked through.
4. Serve with whole grain toast, avocado, and/or salsa!



Kick the Sugar Habit With These Easy Tips

A little sugar here and there is perfectly healthy. How can you enjoy life without eating birthday cake or a homemade brownie occasionally? However, eating sugar in excess can affect blood sugar, heart health, fatigue, sleep, and much more. If you catch yourself adding teaspoons of sugar to your coffee every morning or reaching for the candy in your kitchen drawer a few times a day, there are a few things you can do to kick the sugar habit:

- **Use less sugar in baked good recipes.** You can reduce the sugar in any baked good recipe and still get a quality product! Start with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reduction. For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup instead.
- **Use fruit for dessert.** Fruit provides yummy sweetness and is full of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. It's the perfect "dessert" option. Try a fresh bowl of berries or baked apples with cinnamon to curb your sweet tooth and reap the health benefits fruit provides.
- **Read food labels.** The updated food labels now have an "added sugar" category (see photo). This is essential because some foods have naturally occurring sugar. For example, milk contains lactose, which is naturally occurring and not as concerning. However, it's the added sugar in foods that should be limited. Read the food labels and aim for less than 10 grams of added sugar per serving.
- **Opt for unsweetened teas, fizzy drinks, and water.** Much of the added sugar intake in the United States comes from sugar-sweetened beverages. In fact, one 20 oz soda has roughly 65 grams of sugar, or about 16.5 teaspoons! Naturally sweeten tea or seltzer water with a spritz of lemon, lime, or grapefruit juice, or infuse your water with fruit and herbs such as lemon and basil, or orange and mint for a refreshing sweet treat.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	

The recommended limit of sugar is about 6 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men per day according to the American Heart Association. The best thing you can do to kick your sugar habit is to be mindful of your intake and use the guidelines above to steer you in the right direction!

Warm Apples with Cinnamon

Serves: 2

Use this recipe as a fun dessert or snack idea to help curb your sweet tooth!

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 2 apples, cored and sliced
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions:

1. Melt coconut oil in a pan over medium heat.
2. Add apple slices and sauté until soft, about 5-8 minutes.
3. Sprinkle cinnamon over the top until evenly coated.
4. Divide into bowls and enjoy!

You can also sprinkle ground flax or chopped walnuts over the top or add these warm apples on top of yogurt. Enjoy!



[Return to Home Page](#)