

## 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](http://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.

## 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.

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



## Fight Inflammation with Food

Do you experience inflammation daily? If so, you may want to consider looking at your diet and incorporating some anti-inflammatory foods to help! Foods that contain high amounts of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and even fiber can help fight inflammation in the body and improve daily living. If you're ready to live pain-free, consider adding these foods to your daily diet:

- **Walnuts:** Just ¼ c. of walnuts daily can help curb inflammation. They contain high amounts of ALA omega-3 fatty acids, which is immensely helpful to combat inflamed joints or muscles. Add these tasty morsels to your breakfast oatmeal or toss into a dinner salad to reap the health benefits.
- **Ginger:** One teaspoon or 1 small piece of fresh ginger root contains ample amounts of antioxidants, which are helpful for reducing inflammation. Ginger is especially known for helping reduce inflammation in the gut! Toss some ground ginger into your favorite baked goods or add fresh chopped ginger root to a tasty stir-fry.
- **Leafy Greens:** There are many benefits for adding green leafy veggies into your daily diet. These superfoods are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants, which is the perfect concoction to combat inflammation. You don't have to eat a green leafy salad every day (unless you want to!). Sauté your favorite leafy greens (kale, spinach, bok choy, collard greens, etc.) in 1 tsp olive oil, salt, and pepper for an easy and tasty side dish, or toss some chopped greens into your breakfast scrambled eggs.
- **Tart Cherries:** Just 1 cup of fresh tart cherries provides phytochemicals known specifically to fight inflammation and cancer-causing free radicals in the body. Cherry season is right around the corner, so don't be shy about consuming these tasty treats!
- **Tomatoes:** Rich in a protective compound called Lycopene, tomatoes are especially good for reducing inflammation in the body and promoting a healthy heart. Fresh, canned, or frozen, tomatoes are easy to add to any dish. Try an easy caprese salad recipe with freshly chopped tomatoes, basil leaves, and sliced mozzarella cheese, with a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar for a fun summer salad.

Fight your inflammation by adding these healthy foods to your daily diet. In general, nuts, seeds, veggies, fruit, whole grains, beans, and legumes all contain high amounts of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and fiber that can help reduce inflammation. Add these healthful foods to your daily diet and enjoy your pain-free movement!

## Ginger Beef Stir-Fry

Serves: 4



### Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Garlic (cloves, minced)
- 1 tbsp fresh Ginger (peeled and grated), or 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 1 tbsp Honey
- 1 tbsp Sesame or Canola Oil
- 1 lb Beef Tenderloin (sliced into strips)
- 1/2 Yellow Onion (diced)
- 3 stalks Celery (chopped)
- 3 cups Snap Peas
- 3 cups Mushrooms (sliced)

### Directions:

1. Mix together soy sauce, garlic, ginger and honey in a jar. Put on a lid and shake well. Set aside.
2. Add oil to a large frying pan and place over medium heat. Add beef and yellow onion. Sauté for 3 to 5 minutes or until beef is cooked through. Add in celery, snap peas and mushrooms. Sauté for another 5 minutes. Pour in sauce from the jar. Stir well to mix. Once everything is well combined, turn off the heat.
3. Plate stir fry. Garnish with sesame seeds if you like. Enjoy!



## Keep Cool with These 4 Nutrition Tips

It's very obvious many of us are feeling a little overwhelmed with the heat this summer! As temperatures skyrocket well into the 100-degree range, many of us are attempting to find ways to keep cool during the day. Here are a few tips to keep you cooled off and properly nourished during these hot summer months:

1. Drink more water: This tip is a no-brainer for many, but it's often a forgotten tool to keep the body cool! If you're not a fan of plain water, add some fruit and herbs such as strawberry and fresh mint to add natural flavor. You can even try low sugar flavored seltzer waters or iced tea to quench your thirst. Aim to drink at least half your body weight in water. For a 150-pound person, that would be at least 75 fluid ounces per day!
2. Eat water-rich fruits & veggies: Get more hydration by filling up on fresh fruits and veggies, especially those that have more water content. Melons, strawberries, broccoli, celery, bell peppers, peaches, oranges, citrus, lettuce, and pineapple are a few high water produce items to name. Rule of thumb, add a serving or two of water-rich fruits or veggies to every meal.
3. Make no-cook meals: If you're feeling too hot and sluggish to cook, there's nothing wrong with that! Many people don't have a desire to cook hot meals on hot days. Toss together a healthy salad with plenty of fresh greens, crunchy veggies, and lean protein, or stick with sandwiches on whole grain bread with a side of carrot or celery sticks. Check out the featured recipe for another no-cook meal idea!
4. Make your own frozen treats: Skip the frozen food aisle and make your own fun frozen treats! Blend together fruit, lemon or lime juice, and honey, and freeze in popsicle molds. Or make your own banana "nice cream" by blending frozen bananas with vanilla yogurt!

The hot summer months don't have to zap your energy or motivation to eat healthy foods. Take advantage of this time and enjoy fun frozen treats, fresh fruits and veggies, and be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Your body will thank you!

## Cilantro Lime Black Bean Rice Bowl

Serves: 2

Recipe from That Clean Life

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup Brown Rice (microwaveable or pre-cooked)
- 1 cup Black Beans (cooked, rinsed)
- 1 Lime (juiced, plus more for serving)
- 1 stalk Green Onion
- 1 tbsp fresh or dried Cilantro (finely chopped)
- 1/8 tsp Smoked Paprika
- 1/8 tsp Garlic Powder
- Sea Salt & Black Pepper (to taste)
- 2 cups Baby Spinach
- 1 Red Bell Pepper (sliced)
- 1/2 cup Cherry Tomatoes (chopped)



### Directions:

1. Add the pre-cooked/microwaveable brown rice with black beans to a bowl with the lime juice, green onion, cilantro, paprika, and garlic powder. Stir to combine and season with salt and pepper to taste.
2. To serve, divide the baby spinach between bowls then add cooked rice, black beans, peppers, and tomatoes. Season with additional lime juice or salt and pepper. Enjoy!

## Perfect Portions

Did you know you can estimate portion sizes using just your hands? Learning about proper portion sizes can seem overwhelming, but if you can adopt the following visual to help you better understand portions, you'll learn it's easier than you think!



*Image from Nestle Professionals Website*

**Fruits & Veggies:** A serving of fruits and veggies is about 1 cup, or the size of your fist. This includes both cooked and fresh produce. Starchy veggies such as beans, legumes, corn, peas, and potatoes should be measured as a carbohydrate or grain (see below).

**Starchy Veggies & Grains:** A good portion size for starchy veggies and grains is about ½ cup, or one cupped handful. Nuts and seeds also fit into this category! Whole grains include brown rice, quinoa, barley, oatmeal, or cereal. The exception to this is all types of bread. Instead of using your hands to portion out bread, read the food label to see what the proper serving size is.

**Protein:** 4 ounces of protein is a good serving size and generally measures out to be 20-30 grams of protein per serving. A good visual of this is about the size of your palm. Chicken, beef, fish, eggs, pork, wild game, and other lean meat sources are all considered lean protein.

**Fats/Oils:** Most serving size recommendations for fats and oils (besides nuts and seeds) is about 1 teaspoon, which can visually be compared to the size of your finger tip. Butter and oils (olive, canola, peanut, etc) fit into this category.

Of course, not all foods are created equal. This tool is used as an estimate! Cheese, yogurt, and other dairy foods aren't listed here, but equally have their own serving size recommendation. Reading food labels is the perfect way to determine proper serving size of foods if you're ever in question!

## Sheet Pan Roasted Chicken & Veggies

Total Time: 30 Minutes

Serves: 2

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups Brussels Sprouts (halved or quartered)
- 1 cup Broccoli (cut into small florets)
- 1 Carrot (peeled, thinly sliced)
- 1 Yellow Onion (medium, cut into wedges)
- 8 ozs Chicken Breast
- 1 tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 tsp Italian Seasoning
- 1/2 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1/4 tsp Sea Salt



### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Add the veggies and the chicken to the baking sheeting then drizzle with the oil and season with the Italian seasoning, garlic powder, and salt.
3. Bake for 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and the veggies are tender. Season with additional salt if needed. Divide between plates and enjoy!

## What's For Breakfast?

Breakfast truly is the most important meal of the day! The term breakfast simply means “breaking the fast”, the fast referring to the long sleep without food as the body rests. Breaking the fast is extremely important for jumpstarting your metabolism and giving you an energy boost to get your daily tasks done without crashing mid-morning.

Not every breakfast is created equal. For example, it's fun every once in a while to eat a doughnut, but the simple carbohydrates can cause a crash early in the day. Adding a mix of protein, complex carbs, and fats is important to ensure you have the proper nutrients for sustained energy!

## What are the 3 key food groups needed to create a healthy breakfast?

1. **Protein.** This macronutrient helps keep you full and maintain lean muscle mass. Without it, you'll be starving by 9:00! Healthy breakfast protein options include eggs, lean breakfast meats, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or nuts and nut butters.
2. **Fruit or Veggie.** A healthy breakfast should include a fruit and/or veggie. You may be thinking, how can I add veggies to my breakfast? It's easy - saute your favorite veggies with scrambled eggs or lean breakfast meat! Or add a bowl of berries, apple slices, grapefruit, or orange wedges on the side. Fruits and veggies at breakfast provide fiber and plenty of vitamins and minerals to fuel the brain and body.
3. **Whole grains.** Fiber and b-vitamin rich whole grains are helpful for providing the body immediate energy to get through a busy morning. Swap out white toast with whole grain toast for an energy boost! Other great whole grains to eat in the morning include oatmeal, buckwheat pancakes, or bran cereals.

If breakfast isn't your favorite meal of the day, don't sweat! It doesn't have to be an elaborate meal. It can be as easy as peanut butter on whole grain toast with a banana on the side (protein, whole grain, & fruit)! Don't forget to break the fast every morning so you have enough energy throughout your day - your body will thank you!

## Turkey, Egg, & Veggie Scramble

**Serves: 1**

### Ingredients:

- 4 1/16 ozs Turkey Sausage (casing removed)
- 1 cup Baby Spinach (chopped)
- 2 Egg (whisked)
- Sea Salt & Black Pepper (to taste)
- 2 tbsp Salsa

### Directions:

1. Heat a pan over medium heat then add the sausage to the pan. Brown for five to six minutes or until cooked through, breaking it up as it cooks. Add the spinach to the pan and move it around until it's wilted.
2. Move the sausage and spinach to one side of the pan and pour the eggs into the empty side. Stir the eggs frequently as they cook and incorporate the spinach and sausage into the egg once the eggs are cooked through. Add the salsa & stir together. Season with salt and pepper if needed and enjoy!



\*Add a side of whole grain toast to complete this meal!

## How to Practice Stress-Free Eating During the Holidays

The Holidays have arrived in full swing! Many people begin to feel anxious and often overwhelmed with the holiday chaos, especially when it comes to food. If you're someone who feels anxious about eating this time of year, here are a few mindful tips to practice so you can enjoy the holidays without stress:

### 1. Give Yourself Permission to Eat Your Holiday Favorites

Most of the time our Holiday favorites are only served once a year. Internally give yourself permission to eat your favorites! A slice of pie won't make or break your health. Sure, a slice of pie every day for a whole year might, but not a few slices during the holidays!

### 2. Use Smaller Plates

This is a great tool to help keep your portions under control. Just remember to avoid "piling high" and keep track of how many times you refill it.

### 3. Use the "Plate Method"

The plate method is another handy tool to encourage healthy portions. When putting together your holiday plate, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  a plate of veggies and fruits,  $\frac{1}{4}$  plate of protein, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  plate of starchy veggies or grains. Every holiday plate looks different, but you can use this plate method as a guide to help you keep portions in check and encourage intake of fiber and nutrient-rich foods!



### 4. Fill Up on Fiber & Protein First

Fiber from veggies, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and seeds and protein from lean meat, eggs, fish, and beans will help you feel full longer. This prevents "grazing" throughout the day. Practice the plate method above to ensure you're filling up on nutrient-rich fiber and protein!

### The Bottom Line:

Enjoy your holiday favorites! This time only comes once a year, so it's best to enjoy it. Fill up on nutrient-rich foods first (veggies, fruit, whole grains, lean protein) and give yourself permission to eat your holiday favorites.

## Leftover Turkey Stew

*Use your holiday leftovers in a stew or soup!*  
*Recipe from [eatingwell.com](http://eatingwell.com)*

Serves: 4

Time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 ½ cups chopped yellow onion
- 4 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 2 cups leftover gravy (see Tip)
- 4 cups leftover roasted vegetables, cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 cups shredded cooked turkey
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper



### Directions

1. Heat oil in a large heavy pot over medium-high heat. Add onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and starting to brown, about 6 minutes.
2. Add broth and gravy; let the mixture come to a boil, stirring occasionally. Stir in leftover vegetables and turkey; cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in parsley, salt and pepper.

*Tip: Use whatever leftovers you have (i.e. potatoes, green beans, corn, ham, etc.) in this recipe - it doesn't have to be exact!*

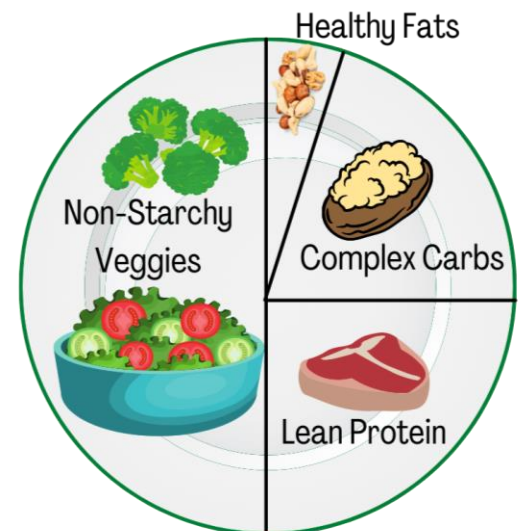


## Prioritize the Plate Method

The new year is right around the corner, and many people are already planning out their New Year's Resolution. One of the most simple methods to follow to improve your nutrition is the *plate method*! This method focuses on helping you build a healthy meal without having to worry about food journaling or crazy restrictive diets. The plate method focuses on high fiber, protein, vitamin, and mineral intake, all of which have been shown to improve your total health.

Here are the 4 simple steps to follow the plate method:

- 1. Pick your protein:** Fill  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate with lean protein. Chicken, fish, ground beef, turkey, wild game, seafood, beans, legumes, or soy products count as a protein.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a regular 9-inch plate is equivalent to about 4 ounces, or the size of a deck of cards.
- 2. Add a hefty side of veggies:** Fill HALF your plate with non-starchy veggies, which include lettuce, spinach, brussels sprouts, carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, bell peppers, or any other combination. Make it a complementary side to your protein! Try chicken with a large side salad or steak with a side of roasted brussels sprouts and steamed broccoli.
- 3. Choose a complex carb:**  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate, or about  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 cup, should include a complex carbohydrate. Fruit, whole grains, and starchy veggies like potatoes, peas, and corn are all included in this category. They are carbohydrate-rich, so needed in smaller amounts, but are still high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, so should not be forgotten!
- 4. Don't forget your dose of healthy fats:** Although needed in smaller amounts, fats are very important to include in a meal. Consuming healthy fats in a meal helps absorb fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, & K, and also improves brain and heart function. All you need is about a teaspoon of oil (olive, grapeseed, or avocado),  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a large avocado, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup nuts and seeds.



Putting it all together: Start with your protein, add a big side of veggies, choose a complex carb, and top it off with a little bit of healthy fat to complete your meals! The more consistent you can be with following this “checklist” the more natural it will come when plating your meals. Use the graphic above to help you remember how to practice the plate method!

## RECIPE: **Quick Vegetable Saute**

Time to cook: 15 minutes

Servings: 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped onion (find frozen chopped onion at the store!)
- 4 cups mixed frozen vegetables (~one 16 oz bag)
- ½ tsp dried dill, or tarragon
- ¼ tsp each or to taste of salt & pepper



### Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion & frozen veggies. Cover & cook, stirring occasionally, until veggies are tender (about 4-6 minutes).
2. Stir in dill or tarragon, salt, and pepper.
3. Add a pat of butter if desired. Enjoy as a tasty veggie side dish!

As the winter draws out and keeps everyone cooped inside, the anxiety of going out to the grocery store can keep you from stocking up on healthy and nourishing foods. Plan ahead at your next grocery stop and purchase enough pantry staples to last through the winter in case of emergencies. There are plenty of options for veggies, fruit, protein, dairy, and whole grains to keep you fueled in the winter with proper amounts of vitamins, minerals, and nutrients.

**Here are a few ideas in each category to have on hand in your pantry during the winter:**

1. Veggies & Fruits: Did you know canned, frozen, or dried produce is just as healthy as fresh? They are preserved at their peak freshness, so contain the same amounts of vitamins and minerals that fresh produce contains. Watch out for added sugar and salt. Purchase low sodium canned goods and sugar-free dehydrated fruits. Stock up on canned and frozen produce, low sodium vegetable juices, dehydrated fruits and veggies, and 100% fruit juices without added sugar to ensure you will get enough vitamins and minerals from produce!
2. Protein: Store your fresh cut meats in the freezer if you won't be using them in the next week. Meat generally stays good in the freezer for 3-4 months, depending on the cut of meat. Stock up on canned meats (chicken, tuna), canned or frozen beans, dehydrated soy beans, nuts, and nut butters to ensure you have plenty of high protein choices during the winter!
3. Whole Grains: Most whole grain pastas and rice can be stored for 6 months to 1 year. Stock up on brown rice, wild rice, or whole grain pastas. You can also purchase whole grain bread and keep it in the freezer for 1-3 months.
4. Dairy: This category is the hardest to find shelf-stable items for. Most dairy products need to be refrigerated. However, you can purchase dehydrated or canned milk in the store, just in case you need it! Low-fat pudding and even calcium-fortified juice can also be a great substitute for this category if needed.

Don't wait until the next storm blows through! Prepare your pantry now so you can stay safe during these cold and frigid winter months. You can still eat healthy with shelf-stable foods!

## Easy White Bean Soup

Serving size: 1 cup

### Ingredients:

- 2 cans white navy beans, rinsed & drained
- 1 cup chopped frozen or fresh onions
- 1 can chopped carrots, rinsed & drained
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 4 cups chicken or veggie broth, low sodium
- 1 can chicken, rinsed & drained (optional)
- 1 tsp each salt, pepper, & dried oregano



### Directions:

1. Saute onions in a pan with 1 tsp oil until browned. Add beans, carrots, tomatoes, chicken, and broth. Stir to combine.
2. Add salt, pepper, & oregano. Let simmer for 10 minutes, until the soup is warm and reduced.
3. Pair soup with 1 piece whole grain bread & butter. Enjoy on a cold winter day!

### **Celebrate a World of Flavors**

March is recognized as National Nutrition Month (NNM), where we celebrate the importance of healthy eating. Every year the theme of NNM changes. This year the theme is Celebrating A World of Flavors! Part of having a healthy diet is adding variety. If you eat the same thing every single day, your body may be lacking nutrients that you can get from other types of food. By celebrating a world of flavors, you can add variety to your diet and reap the benefits of having a well-rounded nutrient intake!

Here are a few tips to add more variety to your daily diet:

1. **Try a new fruit or veggie:** If you're stuck on eating steamed broccoli with dinner every night, try a different veggie side such as cauliflower, carrots, or even brussels sprouts. Choose 1-2 new fruits and veggies to try each week. You don't have to consume fresh produce - fill your freezer with frozen veggies and fruit or try canned - just make sure to rinse before consuming to rid the salt! Get a colorful array of produce to brighten up your meals and add more variety.
2. **Spice up your meals with new flavors:** Cumin, paprika, turmeric, oregano, garlic powder, cinnamon, basil, you name it. The possibilities for flavor are endless! Spice up your meal with a new flavor. Many spices and dried herbs provide anti-inflammatory properties, which can help with inflammation and even balance blood sugar.
3. **Vary your protein:** Lean meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, nuts, beans, peas, and lentils are great protein sources to add to your meals. Spread your protein intake throughout the day by including a source with meals and snacks. Add nuts with a piece of fruit for a snack or toss some lentils into a soup with veggies for an easy protein-packed dinner. When you vary your protein intake, you get a variety of nutrients and essential amino acids, which are the building blocks for many of the body's processes!
4. **Mix up your grains:** If you're stuck on having bread or rolls for your grain serving, branch out and try some other wholesome grains. Brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat sourdough bread, English muffins, and whole grain pastas are great to try! Try a different whole grain choice each day and be sure to make at least ½ your week whole grains instead of white or refined grains.

Each food has their own unique nutrient profile. If we stick to eating the same foods, we may be missing out on nutrients that are rich in other food sources. Make it a goal this month as we celebrate National Nutrition Month to add some variety to your diet using the recommendations listed above!

## Chicken Sausage & Veggie Skillet

Serves: 4

Total Time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 red potatoes, cubed
- 1 package Chicken Sausage, sliced into rounds
- 2 bell peppers, diced (any color!)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Salt & pepper to taste



### Directions:

1. Add oil & cubed red potatoes to a skillet. Cook for 10-15 minutes until browned & cooked through.
2. Add sliced chicken sausage, bell peppers, and onions. Toss and cook together for 5-10 minutes.
3. Toss in garlic powder, Italian seasoning, paprika, salt, and pepper.
4. Enjoy!

## Super Snacks

Snacks are a great addition to any diet, especially if you have decreased energy throughout the day. Including snacks between meals can help support energy levels, reduce overeating at meals, and even balance blood sugar! It's choosing the right kinds of snacks that's important.

When we consume snacks that are high in simple carbohydrates, it can spike blood sugar and cause an energy crash. Simple carbohydrates include refined crackers, pretzels, white breads or cakes, cookies, and even some granola bars or cereals.

When we include complex carbohydrates and protein at snacks, our energy is more sustained! Complex carbohydrates include whole grains, fruits, and veggies, while protein includes dairy, lean meats, nuts, and seeds.

Here is a list of snack ideas that include both, according to your sweet or savory preference:

### Sweet:

- ¼ cup mixed nuts + 1 cup berries
- 1 banana + 2 tbsp peanut butter
- 1 pear + 1 cup yogurt
- 3 pieces lean beef jerky + 1 apple
- 2 oz cheddar cheese + 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup cottage cheese + ½ cup canned peaches

### Savory:

- 1 cup air popped popcorn + 2 oz cheese
- ¼ cup mixed nuts + 1 cup baby carrots
- 1 piece string cheese + 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 2 celery stalks (cut into smaller sticks) + 2 tbsp peanut butter
- ¼ cup cottage cheese + 1 cup baby carrots (or other veggie)
  - For a fun protein-rich dip, see the attached recipe!
- ¼ cup whole grain crackers + 2 oz cheddar cheese slices

Pair up your favorite fiber and protein-rich foods to create a healthful snack in seconds. Feel the benefits of having sustained energy throughout the day by eating a good snack every day!

## Easy “Ranch Dressing” Cottage Cheese Dip

\*Provides more protein and calcium than plain ranch dressing!

Serves: 2

Total time: 5 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 teaspoon dill, dried
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons parsley, dried
- 1 cup veggies for “dipping” (carrots, celery, bell peppers, etc)



### Directions:

1. Mix together all the dried spices.
2. Mix the spices into 1 cup cottage cheese.
3. Enjoy this “ranch dip” with your favorite fresh veggies!

\*If you want to make an even *easier* dip, omit the seasonings & use dry ranch seasoning powder instead! Add ½ packet per 1 cup cottage cheese.



## Dinner in 10 Minutes or Less

It's the end of a long day and you're feeling too tired to cook. What do you do? Create an easy dinner in 10 minutes or less! The good news is you don't have to make elaborate meals every night to nourish yourself properly. If you have low energy to cook but are still looking to make a wholesome meal, here are a few tips to make dinner in 10 minutes or less:

1. **First, pick your protein.** Easy proteins to keep in your home include frozen pre-cooked or canned meats (tuna, chicken, salmon), beans, eggs, nuts or nut butters, yogurt, or cottage cheese.
2. **Choose an easy veggie side.** Keep canned or frozen veggies available for an easy cook-in-the-microwave option. Steam your favorites and add a taste of butter, salt, and pepper for a veggie side in minutes! Salad kits and pre-chopped veggies are also helpful to add variety.
3. **Add ½ cup of whole grains or starchy veggies.** Complete the meal with a slice of whole grain bread or roll, microwaveable brown rice, or swap it with a starchy veggie (corn, peas, or potatoes). Whole grains and starchy veggies are rich in B-vitamins and fiber, so essential to help complete the meal!

### Here are a few ideas:

- Breakfast For Dinner:
  - Sauté veggies with scrambled eggs and pair with 1 piece of whole grain toast
- Chicken Salad:
  - Combine canned chicken and a pre-made salad kit together
- Easy Wrap:
  - Wrap a whole grain tortilla with 3-4 slices of deli turkey, 1 slice of cheese, and a handful of chopped spinach

The key to making a meal in minutes is knowing *what* to put together (protein, veggie, and starch) and making sure your pantry, refrigerator, or freezer are stocked with easy options. What kind of creation can you come up with?

## Turkey & Spinach Wrap

Time: 5 Minutes

Serves: 1

### Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp dijon mustard
- 1 whole wheat tortilla or wrap
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 3 oz sliced turkey
- ½ cucumber, sliced



### Directions:

1. Spread the mustard in the center of the tortilla.
2. Place the spinach, turkey, and cucumber on top.
3. Roll together and enjoy! Pair with a side of carrot or celery sticks.

## Healthy Freezer Foods

Can frozen foods be healthy? The short answer is yes, they can be! I think we all have that same thought that “healthy” and “convenience” shouldn’t be in the same sentence. However, with the food industry’s skyrocket in creativity, there are so many healthy freezer options out there designed to help you eat healthy when in a pinch. Having an emergency stash of frozen foods can make your life so much easier at times. It’s also helpful to manage your food budget.

Here are a few fun freezer foods and meals to try:

### 1. Protein Bowls

These are gaining popularity in the food market, and rightfully so! They contain a good balance of protein, veggies, and complex carbs to nourish the body and provide energy. A few good brands to try including Healthy Choice, Real Good, and Smart Made. With any frozen meal, it’s good to watch the sodium levels - rule of thumb, keep the sodium amount under 250 milligrams per serving.

### 2. Dark Chocolate Covered Fruit

If you love a fun sweet treat after dinner, frozen dark chocolate covered fruit hit the spot. They are full of fiber from fruit and contain antioxidants from dark chocolate. Tru Fru is a great brand to try - they have endless options including dark chocolate peanut butter bananas or chocolate covered raspberries.

### 3. Steam-in-the-Bag Veggies:

Stock up on your favorite frozen veggies to save both time and money. There are even bags you can steam in the microwave, saving you the stress of washing extra dishes. Pop one in the microwave for a quick veggie side. It’s easy to toss into pasta or other one pot meals as well!

### 4. High Protein Breakfasts:

If you are notorious for skipping breakfast because you’re too tired to cook, there are plenty of healthy pre-made breakfast ideas to try! Prevent the mid-morning crash by stocking up on some healthy frozen breakfast items such as protein waffles, breakfast burritos, or egg sandwiches. A few good brands to try including Kodiak Cakes, Amy’s, or Real Good.

### Key Takeaways:

Frozen foods are the perfect time-savers and are often comparable to fresh! Make your life easier if you don’t have enough time to cook and try some of these options. You’ll be surprised at just how healthy you can eat from the frozen aisles!

## Homestyle Vegetable Beef Soup

From: AllRecipes.com

Serves: 10

### Ingredients:

- 1-pound lean ground beef
- ½ cup diced onion (frozen)
- 1 bag each of frozen chopped carrots, green beans, and corn
- 6 red potatoes, chopped
- 4 cups veggie or beef bouillon, low sodium
- 1 teaspoon salt & pepper



### Directions:

1. Heat ground beef in a pan until cooked through. Break apart with a spoon.
2. Add diced onion. Cook with beef until fragrant.
3. Toss in frozen veggies, potatoes, bouillon, and salt & pepper. Stir together.
4. Let simmer for 25-30 minutes; until veggies are completely cooked through.
5. Enjoy!

## What's The Deal On Sugar?

This question is so frequently asked by many - and the answer is sometimes complex. Let's dive into sugar with a few tips and recommendations:

### 1. **All sugar is digested the same.**

It doesn't matter what type of sugar you are consuming (honey, brown sugar, white sugar, etc.) it's all recognized in the body as sugar and digested the same. Some sweeteners like honey and 100% maple syrup do contain some vitamins and minerals such as calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. However, it's still recommended to consume natural sources in moderation to avoid blood sugar spikes.

### 2. **Fruit contains sugar, but don't cut fruit out of your diet.**

Yes, fruit does contain natural sugars. However, fruit is extremely nutrient-rich and contains a lot of fiber which helps to lower blood sugar spikes. Often when people cut fruit out completely, they aren't getting enough fiber and vitamins, so it's best to not cut fruit out if you're trying to watch your sugar intake. Instead consume the right portions! Aim for 2-3 fruits daily in 1/2 - 1 cup amounts. Also, all fruit is created equal...there is no fruit that is better or less sugary than the other!

### 3. **Aim for less than 24-36 teaspoons per day of added sugar.**

According to the American Heart Association, it is recommended that women consume less than 24 grams and men less than 36 grams of added sugar each day. That is equivalent to about 6 or 9 teaspoons of added sugar. To put that into perspective, one can of soda has about 40 grams of sugar...that's about 10 teaspoons!

Don't get caught up in the numbers! Focus on eating whole fruits in 1/2 - 1 cup portions. Watch your added sugar intake by reading the food labels and choose lower sugar options, such as this Blueberry Orange Sparkling Water recipe instead of soda.

## No Sugar Blueberry Orange Sparkling Water Recipe

Serves: 2

Time: 5 minutes

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup blueberries
- 1 clementine or orange; peeled and sectioned
- 6 ice cubes
- 3 cups sparkling water (La Croix, Bubbly, etc.)

### Directions:

1. Divide blueberries and clementines into mason jars or glasses then use a spoon to gently crush the fruit. Add ice, then pour sparkling water over top. Enjoy on a hot summer day!



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