

Build a Healthy Eating Routine



You know that healthy eating is key to a healthy life — and the good news is that small changes can make a big difference!

Follow these tips to build a healthy eating routine that works for you.

Choose a mix of healthy foods

There are lots of healthy choices in each food group! Choose a variety of foods you enjoy, including:



Whole fruits — like apples, berries, grapefruit, papaya, and bananas



Veggies — like broccoli, sweet potatoes, beets, okra, spinach, peppers, and jicama



Whole grains — like brown rice, millet, oatmeal, bulgur, and whole-wheat bread



Proteins — like lean meats and chicken, eggs, seafood, beans and lentils, nuts and seeds, and tofu



Low-fat or fat-free dairy — like milk, yogurt, cheese, lactose-free dairy, and fortified soy beverages (soy milk) or soy yogurt



Oils — like vegetable oil, olive oil, and oils in foods like seafood, avocado, and nuts



Depending on your culture and tastes, you might choose different foods than the ones listed here — and that's okay! You can find healthy foods that work for you.

Cut down on added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium

Check the Nutrition Facts label to buy foods with less of these 3 things:

- **Added sugars** are sweeteners with calories that food companies add to foods and drinks — or that you add at home. Choose water instead of sugary drinks and limit sweet treats like cake, cookies, and candy.
- **Saturated fat** is higher in animal foods like butter, cheese, whole milk, and fatty meats like ribs and sausage. It's also in some plant foods like coconut oil and palm oil. Choose foods with unsaturated fats instead — like seafood, avocados, nuts and seeds, and olive oil.
- **Sodium** comes from salt — and most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged foods and restaurant meals. Try cooking more at home and flavoring foods with herbs and spices instead of salt.

What about alcohol?

If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation — 1 drink or less in a day for women and 2 drinks or less in a day for men. Remember, drinking **less is better** for your health. And if you're pregnant, don't drink at all — alcohol is not safe for your baby.



Choose whole grains

Whole grains are a healthier choice than refined grains. Try:

- Whole-wheat bread instead of white bread
- Corn or whole-wheat tortillas instead of white flour tortillas
- Plain popcorn instead of corn chips

Get a mix of veggies

Make half your plate fruits and veggies — and eat a variety of veggie types, including:

- Dark green veggies — like collards and kale
- Red and orange veggies — like tomatoes and carrots
- Beans, peas, and lentils — like black beans and chickpeas
- Starchy veggies — like potatoes and plantains
- Other veggies — like Brussels sprouts, squash, and cauliflower



Find out how many calories you need

The number of calories you need each day depends on things like your age, weight, height, sex, and how much physical activity you get.

Use the MyPlate Plan tool to find out how many calories you need – and the amount of food you need from each food group: [MyPlate.gov/MyPlate-Plan](https://www.myplate.gov/MyPlate-Plan)



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	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Check the label

The Nutrition Facts label can help you make healthier choices. Look for this key info:

- Serving size – if you eat more than 1 serving, you'll get more of everything on the label
- Calories – keep in mind how many calories you need each day, and how many are in 1 serving

Then look at the % Daily Values:

- 5% or less is **low** – try to choose foods low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium
- 20% or more is **high** – try to choose foods high in fiber, calcium, potassium, iron, and vitamin D



What about taking supplements?

Most people can get all the nutrients they need from food, but you might need to take a vitamin or another supplement. For example, some people don't get enough vitamin D from food and sunlight.

Talk with your doctor **before** you start taking any supplements.

Make healthy eating work for your schedule — and your budget

- Too busy to cook? Try planning and prepping meals ahead of time. Making a big batch of soup or chopping a bunch of veggies on the weekend can save time during the week.
- Worried about cost? Try buying fruits and veggies that are in season — and remember that fresh, frozen, and canned options all count. If you can't afford enough healthy food, check out programs that can help at [USA.gov/Food-Help](https://www.usa.gov/food-help).

Not sure where to start? **Try cooking a healthy dinner just once a week.** Cooking more at home is a great way to start making healthier choices.



Remember, it's never too late to start eating healthy

Healthy eating can lower your risk of health problems like:

- Overweight and obesity
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Some cancers

And there's no one "right" way to do it! You can find an eating routine that works for you, no matter your age, income, lifestyle, culture, or tastes.

So **start simple** — make a small change in your eating routine today.

- Learn about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and get more resources to help you eat healthy at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
- Find more healthy eating tips and recipes at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)

