



## Gout



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Gout, a type of arthritis, is a very painful condition that occurs in episodes or attacks. During an attack, joints become stiff, red, hot and tender. The inflamed joints swell, which limits function. Gout can affect any joints in the body including the feet, arms and legs. Often, the first joint affected is in the big toe.

Gout attacks typically come on suddenly. They tend to start at night and extreme pain and swelling may waken you. Sometimes the gout episode is tied to a stressful event or an illness. For most people, gout episodes clear up in three to ten days without any treatment. There can be long periods between gout attacks — months or even years. However, as the condition advances, so does the frequency of the attacks. Without treatment, gout can cause permanent damage to the joints and kidneys.

### *What Causes Gout?*

Gout is caused by the buildup of uric acid crystals in the joints. Uric acid is the result of a breakdown of purines, which is a substance found naturally in body tissues and many foods. For most people, uric acid dissolves in the blood and travels out of the body in urine. However, for people with gout, the uric acid builds up in the blood and hardens into small crystals. The crystals collect in the joints and under the skin, which causes gout.

There are many reasons someone might get gout:

- Their body may make too much uric acid.
- Their kidneys may not be working correctly, and the uric acid is not being transported out of the body.

- They may be eating too many high-purine foods, which can lead to a buildup of crystals of uric acid in their joints.

### *Who is at Risk for Gout?*

Gout is more common among men than women. The risk for developing gout increases with age — 10 percent of men and 6 percent of women 80 years or older have gout. Having an "obese" body mass index and inactivity also are risk factors. And, with an increase in body mass index and inactivity among younger men and women, gout is becoming more common among individuals in their thirties and forties.

Other risk factors include:

- **Genetics.** If someone in your family has gout, you are at higher risk for developing this condition.
- **Dietary factors:** People who eat lots of purine-rich foods, especially high intakes of meat, seafood and alcohol, are at higher risk.
- **Toxin exposure:** Individuals who have been exposed to lead are at higher risk.
- **Illness or major surgery.** A major health problem that requires long periods of bed rest can provoke a gout attack.
- **Medicines:** Certain drugs also increase your risk, such as diuretics, aspirin, niacin, tuberculosis medicines, chemotherapy and some Parkinson's drugs.

### *Treatments for Gout*

Gout cannot be cured. However, there are treatments that can help you manage the condition and reduce the frequency of the attacks. Self-management is the key to staying healthy. Treatments include both medicines and lifestyle changes.

The first lifestyle change is to get moving and take care of yourself. Excess body weight leads to increased production of uric acid. Getting to and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce your risk for gout flare-ups.

The second lifestyle change is to follow a well-balanced eating plan and to stay well hydrated. Limit foods and beverages high in purines, especially during an attack. Foods to restrict include:

- Alcoholic beverages, especially beer.
- Some fish, seafood and shellfish.
- Some meats and organ meats.

Certain vegetables, grains and dairy products also contain purines. Research shows that these foods do not cause gout attacks. In fact, low-fat dairy foods may help prevent gout attacks.

### **What to Eat**

A low-purine diet should be personalized to fit an individual's dietary needs and food preferences. Some people with gout may need to limit moderate-purine foods in addition to high-purine foods. A registered dietitian nutritionist can help design a gout-friendly diet that is nutritious and tasty. [Find an RDN in your area.](#)

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# How to Talk to Kids about Weight and Obesity



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In today's culture, weight can be a sensitive subject, especially for children and teens. The desire to be thin is reaching school-aged children, as girls as young as 6 years old express concerns about their body image and gaining weight.

Deciding how to approach weight issues with young people deserves careful attention; how you handle the topic can have serious and lifelong implications. Here are some tips for discussing weight with kids, and what to do if a child brings up the topic.

**Encourage open dialogue.** Go ahead and talk with your children about weight and encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings about body image whenever they arise. When children discuss feelings about weight with you, be sure to listen and acknowledge that the feelings are real. If you have had similar experiences, it may help to share them. Explain that people come in all different shapes and sizes and you love your child no matter what.

**Don't make negative comments.** Judging your own body or your child's can result in lasting detrimental effects to your child's body image and relationship with food. Set a good example for children in the way you talk about your own body as well as others'. Skip the lure of fad dieting yourself.

**Take action.** Children learn fast, and they learn best by example. Teach children habits that will help keep them healthy for life. In general, if your child is elementary age or younger and you have some weight concerns, don't talk about it; just start making lifestyle changes as a family. The best thing you can do is make it easy for kids to eat smart and move often. Serve regular, balanced family meals and snacks. Limit the time your child spends watching television or playing video games. Look for ways to spend fun, active time together.

**Avoid the blame game.** Never yell, scream, bribe, threaten or punish children about weight, food or physical activity. If you turn these issues into parent-child battlegrounds, the results can be harmful. Shame, blame and anger are setups for failure. The worse children feel about their weight, the more likely they are to overeat or develop an eating disorder.

**A united front.** As with any other important issue, make sure both parents and other important relatives are on the same page. Mixed messages about weight can have unhealthy consequences.

**Talk with your healthcare provider.** If a health professional mentions a concern about your child's weight, speak with the professional privately. Discuss specific concerns about your child's growth pattern and ask for suggestions on making positive changes in your family's eating habits and activity levels.

**Seek advice.** For kids and teens, check out local programs and professionals who specialize in youth. Look for a registered dietitian nutritionist with a specialty in pediatrics. Many hospitals and clinics have comprehensive programs with education and activities for both kids and adult family members. Some of these options may be covered by your health insurance plan.

**Focus on health over weight.** The key is to consider your child's overall picture of health, not weight. If your family starts eating better and moving more, your children may "grow into" their weight as their height increases. Compliment your children on lifestyle behaviors, such as choosing to play outside over playing video games inside, rather than on the loss of a few pounds.

#### *What to Do if Your Child Says, "I'm So Fat."*

Learn where the thoughts about feeling fat came from. Did a friend or classmate tease your child about weight? Did another relative mention the size of your child's belly or thighs? Is your child feeling embarrassed from having snug-fitting clothes? Was there something on television or online about overweight kids? Maybe some sports are difficult for your child, or perhaps they are chosen last for teams. These frustrating and painful issues are common among children of all sizes.

If another child or an adult is bullying your child, confront the situation directly and as soon as possible. If your child's weight, eating and activity are normal and age-appropriate, reassure your child and don't focus on weight.

#### *If Your Child is "Overweight"*

Weight loss among children can interfere with their growth and negatively impact their body image and relationship with food, so it's important to work with your pediatrician and a registered dietitian nutritionist. Choose a few specific changes that you can make in your family's eating and activity habits, then set realistic goals.

Be mindful that every family is different and change occurs slowly, so be patient and remember there is much more to health than weight.

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## Diverticulitis



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Diverticulitis is an infection in the gastrointestinal, or GI, tract.

The GI tract extends from the mouth to the anus. Diverticula are small pockets or sacs that can form in the lining of the GI tract. This is a condition called diverticulosis. Most people with diverticulosis are not aware of the condition. They remain free of symptoms for their lifetime.

In a very small number of people with diverticulosis — less than 5 percent — the sacs get infected. This is a condition called diverticulitis. The “itis” part of the name means inflammation. The infection often is due to bacteria or stool collecting in the sacs (diverticula).

Diverticulitis can be very painful. You may feel uncomfortably bloated. Many people with diverticulitis also notice a change in bowel patterns, such as constipation or diarrhea. Diverticulitis may cause fever and elevated white blood cells. If the infection gets worse, small holes may form in the GI tract. You may notice GI bleeding, which presents as blood in your stool.

### *Causes of Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis*

There are many reasons that individuals get diverticulosis and diverticulitis:

- **Genetics.** If someone in your family has diverticulosis or diverticulitis, you may be more likely to develop it.
- **Age.** The risk of diverticulosis increases with age and over half of people after 60 and older are affected. The risk of diverticulitis also increases with age.

- **Lifestyle factors.** Diverticulosis is more common among people with “obese” body mass indices and those who are not physically active. Smoking also increases your risk for this condition.
- **Straining.** Straining to pass hard stools stresses the inner lining of the lower GI tract. That stretching can cause diverticulosis.
- **Medicines.** Some studies suggest that certain drugs increase your risk of developing diverticula, such as long-term use of aspirin and steroids.

### *Treatments for Diverticulitis*

If you have diverticulitis, you may need medicine to treat the infection. If the infection is very serious, you may have to refrain from eating for a short time. The goal is to give your bowel time to rest and allow internal bleeding to stop.

Long-term, getting enough fiber is key. Fiber helps to bulk up the stool so that it moves more easily through the colon and out of the body. The typical American gets about half of the recommended amount of dietary fiber. So, chances are you are not eating enough high fiber foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables. An adequate intake of foods high in fiber will not prevent diverticulosis. It will, however, help to reduce the risk of diverticulitis flare-ups.

### *How Much Fiber do Adults Need?*

Adult women should aim for 25 grams of dietary fiber each day. Men need 38 grams per day. Don't worry about counting how many grams of fiber you eat. You can get the right amount of dietary fiber by following a healthy eating style. For example, adults who consume 2,000 calories per day can meet their dietary fiber needs by including the following servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains:

- 2 cups of fruit
- 2½ cups of vegetables
- 3 ounce-equivalents of whole grains

Also, it is important to slowly add fiber to your diet. One reason is that increasing your fiber intake can also increase gas and potential abdominal bloating and discomfort. By gradually adding higher fiber foods to your daily diet, you can reduce the risk of developing gas.

Plus, adding fiber without increasing your intake of fluids may lead to constipation. To help prevent constipation, set a goal to drink at least 8 cups of fluids per day. Fluid helps your body process fiber without discomfort.

### *What to Eat to Get the Dietary Fiber You Need*

The foods highest in fiber are fruits, vegetables, grains and beans. To get the dietary fiber you need:

- Eat fruits and vegetables with peels or skins such as apples or pears with the skin and white or sweet potatoes with the skin, just be sure to wash them first.
- Choose fresh fruit and vegetables instead of juices. Most of the fiber is lost during the juicing process.
- Try stewed prunes — they're a great source of dietary fiber.
- Choose whole-grain breads and cereals. Look for choices with 100-percent whole wheat, whole rye, rolled or whole oats as the first ingredient.
- Have brown or wild rice instead of white rice.

- Enjoy a variety of grains. Good choices include whole-grain barley, oatmeal, farro, kamut (Khorasan wheat or Oriental wheat) and quinoa.
- Bake with whole-wheat flour. You can use it to replace some of the white or all-purpose flour used in your recipes.
- Enjoy cooked beans more often.
- Use dried beans and peas when making casseroles or soups.

### *Read Food Labels*

Compare food labels of similar foods to find higher fiber choices. On packaged foods, the amount of dietary fiber per serving is listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Check the Nutrition Facts labels and try to choose products with at least 4 grams of dietary fiber per serving.

Information on dietary fiber is also listed on the Nutrition Facts label as a percent daily value (%DV). The %DV tells you the amount of the fiber in one serving of the food. To select high fiber foods, look for ones that contain at least 20% DV of the recommended daily intake of fiber.

### *Fiber Supplements*

If it is difficult for you to get the fiber you need from the foods you eat, fiber supplements might be helpful. For people with diverticulitis, your health care provider may recommend products containing either methylcellulose or psyllium.

Fiber supplements must be taken with an adequate amount of liquid. Talk with your doctor to find out if fiber supplements are a good option for you.

### *Foods to Avoid — Generally Speaking, None*

In the past, people with diverticulosis or diverticulitis were told to avoid certain foods. We now know that for most people these foods do not appear to irritate the diverticula. So, if you have been restricting the following foods, you may no longer need to avoid them:

- Popcorn
- Nuts
- Sunflower, pumpkin, caraway, poppy and sesame seeds
- Vegetables with seeds (tomato, zucchini, cucumbers)
- Fruits with seeds (strawberries, raspberries)

Most people can eat the list of foods above. However, individual reactions vary. Some of these foods might trigger your symptoms. Try to develop awareness about the foods you eat and the symptoms you experience. If a specific food bothers you, limit your intake of that food.

### **Get Help from a Nutrition Expert**

For more information about eating for diverticulitis and diverticulosis, ask your health care provider for a referral to a [registered dietitian nutritionist](#).

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# Functional Foods



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Magazine articles and news reports tout the benefits of eating "functional foods," which they claim can do everything from reduce cholesterol to prevent conditions such as heart disease or cancer. At the grocery store, you'll find plenty of breakfast cereals, yogurts and nut butters with similar health benefits proclaimed on their packaging.

Can these modified foods be considered functional foods? What is a functional food exactly?

To answer those questions, it's helpful to remember that most foods are functional as they deliver physiological benefits including protein for muscle repair, carbohydrates for energy or vitamins and minerals for cell function. But in the 1980s, the Japanese government created a class of "functional foods" — conventional and modified foods that included additional health benefits beyond basic nutrition. Although the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or FDA, regulates foods labeled as functional, it does not provide a legal definition of the term.

Functional foods cover a variety of foods, including whole foods along with fortified, enriched or enhanced foods. Generally, they have a potentially beneficial effect on health when consumed on a regular basis at certain levels.



Functional foods may include:

- **Conventional foods** such as grains, fruits, vegetables and nuts.
- **Modified foods** such as yogurt, cereals and orange juice.

The FDA provides regulation and guidance for various health and nutrient claims that may appear on labels, such as those promoting the role of dietary fiber for heart health or advertisements that a product is lite or reduced-fat. However, there's no legal definition for functional foods, so American consumers are left to evaluate some claims on their own. Focusing on the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list on the back of a food package can help you determine if a food is a healthful choice.

Another tricky area is food fortification — when products include added vitamins and other nutrients. Fortified foods have a place in a healthy eating plan, and they may help to fill gaps in nutrient intake, but they shouldn't replace foods that naturally contain those nutrients, when possible. For example, there are only a few foods that naturally contain vitamin D, so products that are fortified with it, such as milk, act as a source of vitamin D for many people. Other foods and beverages may be fortified with nutrients that aren't as difficult to obtain. Some fortified products may also contain high amounts of added sugars or sodium, so be sure to review the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients.

Consider eating more of these nutrient-dense, functional foods.

1. **Cold-Water Fish — Sardines and Salmon**

These protein-packed fish are lower in mercury and have higher amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, which may help lower risk of heart disease and improve infant health when consumed by women during pregnancy or while breast-feeding. About eight ounces of seafood a week is a good goal for adults, which amounts to two meals per week.

2. **Nuts**

They make a great snack, help you feel full and may help promote heart health. Bonus: most unsalted nuts, including cashews and almonds, are good sources of magnesium, which plays a role in managing blood pressure.

3. **Whole Grains — Barley**

Often overshadowed by the fame of oatmeal, barley delivers similar benefits. It's high in dietary fiber, an underconsumed nutrient of public health concern in the U.S., and may help lower cholesterol and assist with blood sugar control.

4. **Beans**

Beans provide dietary fiber, as well as protein, potassium and folate. While canned beans are fine, look for those with no salt added. If you do choose beans with salt added, rinse and drain them before use, which reduces sodium significantly.

5. **Berries**

Whether you opt for strawberries, cranberries, blueberries, raspberries or blackberries, berries in general are wonderful functional foods. Not only are they low in calories, their anthocyanin pigments, which give them color, may offer health promoting benefits. If you can't get fresh berries, frozen unsweetened berries make a fine alternative.

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## 3 Strategies for Successful Meal Planning



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Let's face it, life's hectic. Planning ahead may help relieve mealtime stress. Follow these three steps and you'll be planning and prepping nutritious and delicious meals that fit your preferences and lifestyle!

### *Step 1: Make a Menu*

First, think about your approach to meal planning — do you:

- Want to make a weekly or a monthly plan?
- Prefer to prepare meals ahead of time, just before the meal or a combination of both?
- Want to pick a day to cook meals for the week or a month that you can store in the freezer?
- Need to consider any special nutrition needs for yourself or your family?

Next, either on a sheet of paper, in your phone or on or the computer, create your menu:

1. **Take a minute to read about how to put together a healthy meal** and make sure you are getting the right amount of each food group.
2. **Flip through cookbooks or online sites and find recipes that look good.** Evaluate the level of cooking skill required to make the recipe. Do you have those skills? If not, are you up for the challenge? Also, make sure that you have any special cooking utensils or pans needed for the recipe.
3. **Check in with your family about their schedules and meal preferences.** Weigh those factors as you put together your menu.
4. **Think about the weather.** Hearty soups and stews are ideal for a cold winter's night. A salad with lean protein can make a perfect entrée on a hot summer day. If you are packing lunches, make sure any perishables can be stored in a refrigerator or in an insulated bag with an ice pack.
5. **Find out what ingredients you already have on hand.** It is best to continually rotate foodstuffs rather than store them for long periods of time. So, try to use up the items that you have on hand. You'll also save money!
6. **Check out the sales at your local supermarkets.** Sometimes a discounted price can allow you to treat yourself and your family to a special meal. Remember: produce that is in season tends to be less expensive.
7. **Aim for variety in meals; but, don't feel like every day must be different.** It's OK to have oatmeal or low-fat yogurt with berries several times a week for breakfast. The same goes for lunch; pick a few options and rotate them across a week. Jot down breakfast, lunch and dinner options. And, don't forget about snacks.
8. **Think about how to handle leftovers.** Might you serve them again that week or freeze them for another week? Remember to consider food safety, as refrigerated leftovers should be used up within three to four days or frozen for later use.
9. **Run the menu by others in your household.** Does it look good to them? Make any adjustments needed.
10. **During the week, keep notes about how well the menu worked.** These notes can remind you of ways to improve your recipes and menu.

### *Step 2: Stock Your Pantry and Freezer with the Five Food Groups*

To help get started with meal planning, take time to stock up on the basics. This includes healthy foods that you like to eat and prepare. The lists below provide pantry and freezer items to stock up on from the five food groups. Circle the items you want to stock in your pantry and freezer. Plus, add other items based on your personal health needs and food preferences.

#### *Five Food Groups Pantry List*

**Vegetables:** Keep a variety of canned tomatoes in stock (diced, crushed, whole, stewed). Use them in soups, stews, sauces, casseroles and more! Also, pick up a bottle of your favorite spaghetti sauce. Dried mushrooms are another great pantry item because they can add depth of flavor to your meals.

**Fruits:** Raisins, dried cranberries, dried apricots and other dried fruits are loaded with dietary fiber. They add a punch of flavor to your morning breakfast, midday salad and dinner grains.

**Milk and Dairy Products:** Dried milk is a great back-up item to have on stock. You can use it in your coffee or tea. Boxed milk is also available in single-serving packages and is a great item for lunch boxes. Evaporated milk, available in cans in the baking aisle, can be substituted for liquid milk in most recipes.

**Protein Foods:** Stock up on canned or dried lentils, black, pinto, cannellini, garbanzo and kidney beans. These legumes are a great source of protein. Toss cooked beans in salads, soups, stews and other dishes. Canned tuna, anchovies and sardines are a pantry must — they are a quick way to add protein, healthy fats and flavor to meals.

**Grains:** Keep a stash of oatmeal, buckwheat and other whole-grain cereals in the pantry. For an extra boost, add nuts and fresh berries to these hot cereals. Barley, farro, quinoa and other grains provide staples for healthy meals. Also, keep a variety of rice on hand — long grain, short grain, basmati and brown rice. Spaghetti, ziti, penne and other pastas are great for an easy, quick and filling family meal. Give yourself an extra nutrition boost by buying whole-grain pasta or trying pasta made from legumes.

Also, stock up on:

- **Condiments:** Ketchup, mustard and relish can be stored in the pantry until they are opened. Once you open them, keep them in the fridge.
- **Oil and vinegar:** Extra-virgin olive oil is a versatile, heart-healthy option. Other oils, such as peanut, walnut and sesame add a burst of flavor to meals. Pick up different types of vinegar, such as cider, white and balsamic. Each imparts a unique flavor to your recipes.
- **Stock:** Vegetable, chicken and beef stock are the basics of many recipes. Opt for those are low-sodium or contain no added salt.
- **Herbs and spices:** Pick up small containers of ground herbs and spices. That way they are as fresh as possible when you use them.
- **Flax and other seeds:** Flax and chia seeds deliver of protein, fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. Add them to cereal, salads, sauces and home-baked goods. If you buy whole flaxseed, make sure you grind it up before eating so your body can absorb the nutrients.

### *Five Food Groups Freezer List*

To help make sure you don't store food beyond freshness, put dates on the packages before storing in the freezer. And, use the oldest first.

**Vegetables:** Pick up some of your favorite frozen veggies. These are a great source of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients because the flash-freezing process locks in the nutrition. Look for packages without sodium. And, while you are in the produce aisle, grab some fresh herbs. When you get home, fill ice cube trays with chopped herbs, top off the herbs with boiling water, and carefully place in the freezer. Add these herbs cubes for a punch of freshness to your meals.

**Fruits:** Stash frozen berries and other fruits in the freezer. They are a great way to add nutrition to a morning smoothie.

**Milk and Dairy Products:** Freeze Parmesan and other pre-shredded cheeses — toss them into soups, stews and pasta dishes. Low fat, frozen yogurt can be a quick dessert for a special occasion.

**Protein Foods:** Stock up on salmon and other fatty fishes to ensure you have ready access to healthy fats. Frozen lean meats and poultry also store well in the freezer. One tip: make sure you move it to the refrigerator one day before cooking to give adequate time for defrosting. Keep a variety of nuts in the freezer. This helps prevent them from spoiling. Add them to cold cereal, salads, hot grains and other dishes.

**Grains:** Whole-grain corn tortillas freeze well and can be used for quick breakfasts, lunches or dinners. Can't eat that loaf of bread fast enough while it is fresh? Make it a habit to freeze part of the loaf and defrost slices as you need them.

### *Step 3: Keep a Running Grocery List*

In a convenient place keep a pad and pen and, as you use up grocery items, write them down on the list. This way you don't have to worry about forgetting anything when you hit the supermarket. Or, use an app for that.

There are many grocery shopping apps available for both iOS and Android platforms. Some apps even include information on where to get the best deals on food prices. For example, after you enter your list, the app might suggest which local supermarket has the best prices for those items. Others allow you to sort your list into categories for ease of shopping. And, meal planning options also are special features of some apps.

On your list — be it paper or app-based — compile the needed ingredients for the meals you plan to make for the week. Also, think about how often you are able and want to shop. Plus, think about your plan for meals and check to see what ingredients you already have and what items you need. Remember to check the cabinets, pantry, fridge and freezer. Ideally, you want to continually use what you have on hand so that your meals are made with fresh ingredients and this will also help reduce food waste.



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# What is an Anti-Inflammatory Diet?



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Did you know that research has found a link between inflammation and increased risk for chronic diseases? And, these studies suggest that heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and obesity might be due to chronic inflammation.

## **Inflammation is a Normal Body Response to Promote Healing**

Inflammation is a sign that the immune system is fighting infection. The infection may be related to germs, wounds, allergens, toxins or other causes.

Typically, we think of signs of inflammation as redness, swelling and pain. But, sometimes inflammation can happen within our bodies. Someone with bronchitis has a lung infection. The lungs may become inflamed. And, this may be a sign that their immune system is working to fight that infection. Excess body fat may promote changes in the body cells that promote chronic inflammation. The signs of inflammation may not be obvious. For others, chronic inflammation may relate to a problem with their immune system.

Whatever the cause, long term chronic inflammation may damage the body's DNA, increasing the risk for cancer.

## What We Know and Don't Know about Foods and Inflammation

Various anti-inflammatory diets are promoted online. But, researchers are still figuring out how what we eat may affect inflammation. So far, it appears that eating a variety of nutritious foods may help reduce inflammation in the body. What we eat may help prevent and keep chronic inflammation in check. And, a healthy eating plan provides nutrients that help keep your immune system working well:

- Fruits and vegetables contain natural components called phytonutrients that may help protect against inflammation.
- Healthy fats, such as monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids, may help keep inflammation at bay.

Foods high in saturated fats may increase inflammation. Plus, highly processed foods and other foods with trans fat also may be inflammatory.

### Anti-inflammatory Superfoods”

Dark chocolate (more than 70-percent cocoa), red wine, green tea, turmeric and ginger are thought to help reduce inflammation. But, many of the findings of the anti-inflammatory effects of these foods comes from studies done with lab animals. We cannot form conclusions about how these foods impact inflammation in people at this time. And, it is not yet known how much and how often “anti-inflammatory” foods must be eaten to combat inflammation. For now, the best advice is to adopt a healthy eating style.

## Five Dietary Approaches That May Help Reduce Inflammation

Are you looking for ways to help combat inflammation? Consider the following five steps:

### *Step 1: Make Fruits and Vegetables Half Your Plate*

- Aim to include vegetables and fruits with every meal
- Eat a variety of brightly colored vegetables and fruits:
  - All forms count — including fresh, frozen, canned and dried. Just be sure to look for products with no added sugars and lower amounts of sodium.
  - Focus on vegetables from each subgroup weekly, including dark green, red and orange vegetables, as well as beans and peas.

### *Step 2: Be Smart about Protein*

- Don't overdo the protein — five to six ounce equivalents per day is appropriate for most people that are moderately active. And, when it comes to protein, select fatty fish containing omega-3s a couple of times each week.
- Enjoy meatless meals with tofu, tempeh, and legumes such as beans, peas, and lentils.
- Choose leaner protein foods, such as skinless chicken or turkey or lean cuts of beef and pork.

- Include low-fat or fat-free dairy products, like skim milk and yogurt, which are lower in saturated fat.
- Minimize highly processed foods such as deli meat, bacon, and sausage.

### *Step3: Choose Healthy Fats*

- Use monounsaturated fats, including olive, safflower, sunflower, canola, peanut and avocado oils.
- Eat omega-3 rich foods:
  - Enjoy salmon or another fatty fish two to three times per week.
  - Snack on nuts, such as walnuts.
  - Toss ground flaxseed, chia seeds and hemp seeds into salads and other dishes.
- Minimize highly processed foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils and high amounts of saturated fat.

### *Step 4: Select Whole Grains*

- Choose whole-grain flours and cereals more often, rather than those made with refined flour.
- Include a variety of whole grains, such as brown rice, quinoa, millet and wheat berries.

### *Step 5: Experiment with Fresh Herbs and Spices*

- Infuse flavor into your dishes by adding fresh herbs.
- Spice up your recipes by experimenting with spices.

## **Other Lifestyle Factors**

Though what you eat is important, it's not the only factor that impacts chronic inflammation. To help stay healthy:

- Get adequate sleep — both quality and duration of sleep directly impact inflammation.
- Be active — regular physical activity has anti-inflammatory effects. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a day on most days of the week.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight — excess body fat could contribute to increased inflammation.

## **Need Help Designing an Anti-inflammatory Diet?**

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help develop an eating plan that fits your unique lifestyle, taste preferences and medical needs.





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## Make Your Kid's Meal a My Plate Superstar



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The USDA's MyPlate program is designed to make balanced eating easy to visualize and apply to everyday life. Serving kids meals and snacks according to these guidelines provides the fuel they need to thrive — but how are you actually supposed to *get* them to eat it? [Try these RDN-approved tips to make any meal a MyPlate superstar!](#) 

### Fruits and Vegetables

Getting kids involved in the kitchen will increase their likelihood of eating fruits and vegetables. Children learn by doing things and by touching, smelling and feeling. Get your kids involved in the kitchen at an early age so they develop a positive and healthy relationship with food later in life. Assign them age-appropriate tasks.

Use the color of fruits and vegetables to your advantage and play with fun shapes if that works in your family. At home, offer an assortment of veggies and consider serving them in a dish your kid loves. Or, serve veggies or a salad as an appetizer, before dishing out the entree. Don't forget to model healthy habits by also eating a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.

## Lean Proteins

What is a lean protein? This category includes chicken, turkey, lean beef, fish and vegetarian proteins such as beans and tofu. Protein can be a difficult food for children to eat because of the chewy consistency and strong flavor. Be persistent and start slow. If they like chicken nuggets, then consider transitioning to salmon nuggets. Pair accepted foods with other foods similar in color and consistency. Remember, there are plant-based protein foods you can include that might be easier for your child to accept. Consider nuts or nut butters as part of snacks or breakfast, or include beans and tofu as alternatives for meat.

## Whole Grains

Whole grains contribute fiber to the diet and also provide iron, B vitamins and other important nutrients kids need. To get your kids to eat more whole grains, serve more. If they're hesitant, start slow and mix it up — add options such as whole-wheat bread, pasta and brown rice to what they're used to eating. If your child cannot eat gluten, try a gluten-free whole-grain option such as quinoa, brown rice or millet.

## Healthy Fats

Fat is an important source of calories that support infants' and toddlers' growth and should not be restricted. Two fatty acids — linoleic and alpha-linolenic acid — are essential for your child's growth and brain development. Our bodies don't make these fats, so we must get them from food. Kids also need some fat from food to help their bodies absorb vitamins A, D, E and K. Healthy sources of fat include avocado, nut butter, olives, olive oil and canola oil. Whole eggs and dairy products are other kid-friendly sources of dietary fat.

## And a Drink on the Side

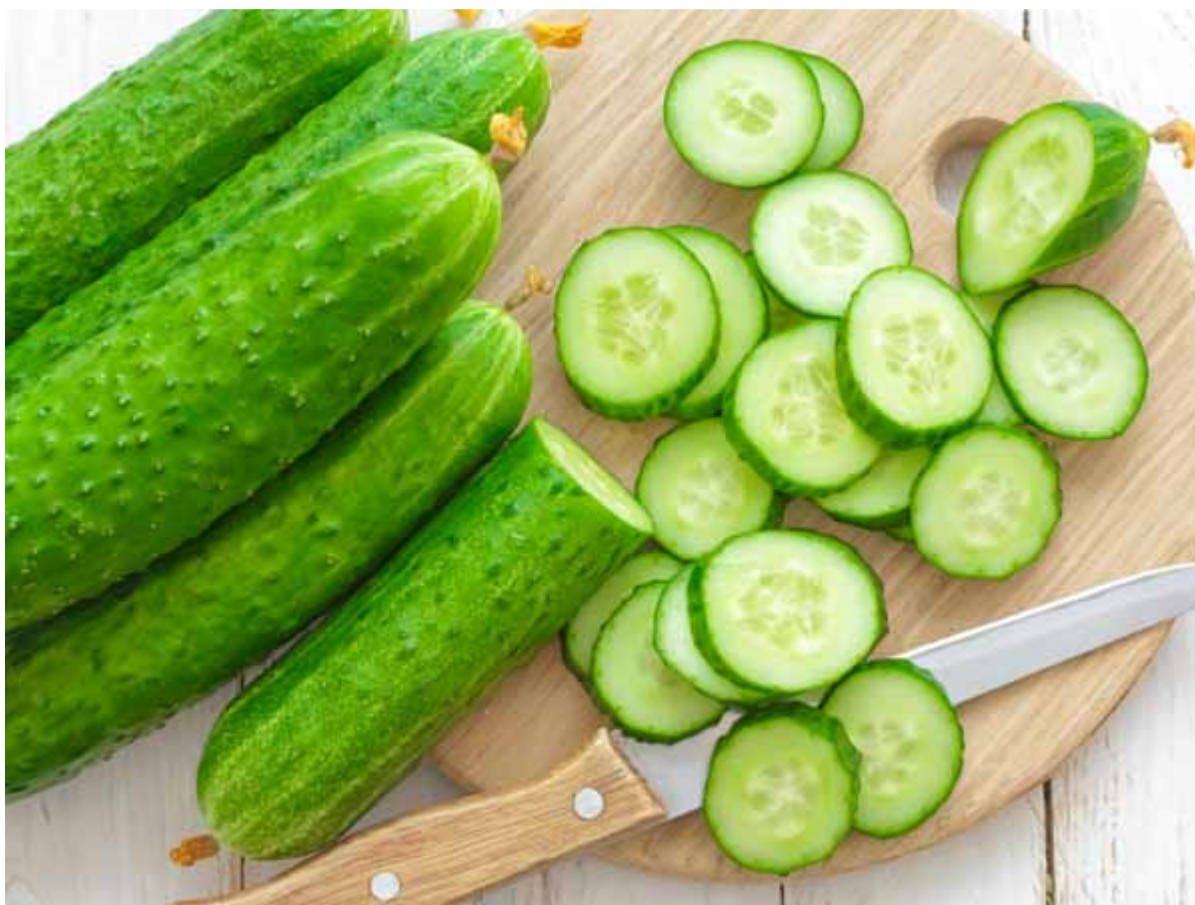
Get kids used to making water their main beverage by serving it at each meal. Or, try other healthy choices such as fat-free or low-fat milk, or an unsweetened non-dairy beverage. Limit sugary beverages and fruit juice, and, for older kids who want a bubbly beverage, offer seltzer water instead of soda.

However you incorporate MyPlate suggestions into your kids' meals, plan to do it for yourself! Whether they realize it or not, parents are their children's first nutrition teachers. Kids learn by example and they want to imitate parents. What parents eat will directly affect what a child eats. Be a good role model and create healthy eating habits for the entire family.

Reviewed June 2019 by Jessica Cording, MS, RD, CDN. Published August 1, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



## “Negative Calorie Foods” Still Count



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Diet myths have come and gone, but some manage to stand the test of time. For example, the claim that celery, lettuce or other fruits and vegetables take more energy to chew and digest than they actually contain, is based on wishful thinking and not research. Although many vegetables and fruits may be low in calories or provide a good source of dietary fiber, make no mistake, they still count towards a day's intake and aren't actually a “negative calorie” food.

### *How Metabolism Works*

Our bodies burn a certain amount of calories at rest. This resting metabolic rate, or RMR, takes into account height, weight and age, as well as the energy needed for normal body functions such as breathing and pumping blood.

The next factor to consider with metabolism (and the one negative-calorie proponents will tout) is the thermic effect of food, or the amount of energy used to chew, digest and store

nutrients. Approximately 10 percent of the calories we burn each day are used for this purpose. And, despite a minor rise in energy expenditure for a few hours after eating food — even with low-calorie foods — don't expect this to result in extra weight loss.

Physical activity, whether it's from activities of daily living or fitness activities, must also be taken into account when calculating total calories burned in a day.

A quick search on the internet leads to lists of "negative-calorie foods" and "calorie-burning" diets. Celery often tops lists, followed by lettuce, cucumbers and a few citrus fruits. These foods share similar nutrition profiles: they're low in calories and have water contents greater than 90 percent by weight. These low-calorie, plant-based foods are great additions to a balanced eating plan but they lack adequate protein and fat to be the only source of nutrition.

### *Establish a Flexible Approach to Eating*

Shifting the focus away from individual foods and concentrating efforts on establishing a healthy eating pattern is a more sustainable and flexible approach to eating that includes a variety of foods. With over 70-percent of U.S. adults having "overweight" or "obese" body mass indices, there is both an interest and need for clarity when it comes to safe, healthy and sustainable weight-loss approaches. Working towards establishing an eating pattern inclusive of a balanced variety of foods is an approach that will most likely lead to healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.

Before beginning a weight loss program, consult with a registered dietitian nutritionist who will work with you to create a realistic and healthful eating plan based on your medical history, lifestyle and preferences.

Reviewed June 2019 by Christy Wilson, RD. Published July 22, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



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# What is the Low FODMAP Diet?



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Like any eating style that makes the news, the low FODMAP diet has generated quite a buzz. This eating plan was originally developed to help manage the symptoms associated with irritable bowel syndrome. But wait, what exactly is a FODMAP? Should you be following this diet?

## What Is a FODMAP?

FODMAP is an acronym for:

**Fermentable**

**Oligosaccharides**

**Disaccharides**

**Monosaccharides**

**and**

**Polyols**

These short-chain carbohydrates are found naturally in many of the foods we eat. These particular types of carbohydrates share three important characteristics: they may be poorly absorbed in the intestine, draw extra water into the intestine and are rapidly fermented by bacteria in the gut. Depending on the quantity consumed and an individual's tolerance, FODMAPs can lead to increased gassiness, bloating, abdominal pain and diarrhea. FODMAPs are not inherently bad and are found in a variety of very nutritious foods.

Consult a medical professional to rule out celiac disease, cancer and food allergies or intolerances, prior to starting any new diet – especially if you're experiencing stomach pain or intestinal problems. If a FODMAP diet is prescribed, working with a registered dietitian nutritionist is important to make sure you're getting the nutrients you need.

#### **Four Types of FODMAPs**

- **Oligosaccharides**

There are two different groups of oligosaccharides: fructans and galactans. Fructans are found in wheat products, onions, garlic, artichokes and inulin. Galactans are found in lentils, chickpeas, broccoli, beans, Brussels sprouts and soy-based products.

- **Disaccharides**

The most commonly known disaccharide is lactose, which naturally occurs in milk and some dairy products and requires lactase, a digestive enzyme, for absorption. Milk, yogurt, soft cheeses, ice cream and puddings are all disaccharides containing lactose.

- **Monosaccharides**

Fructose is a monosaccharide found in fruits. Fructose absorption is enhanced when it is combined with sources of glucose, another type of sugar. Therefore, when it comes to FODMAPs, not all fruits are equal. Those containing equal amounts of fructose and glucose may be more easily tolerated. Some examples of higher-fructose containing

foods that may cause gastrointestinal symptoms include (but is not limited to) agave, honey, mangos, watermelon, sugar snap peas and high fructose corn syrup.

- **Polyols**

Polyols are sugar alcohols found in some stone fruits (such as cherries and nectarines), apples and pears; in vegetables such as mushrooms and cauliflower; and in some sugar substitutes containing xylitol or sorbitol.

### **How the Low FODMAP Diet May Work**

This diet starts with a low FODMAP period, usually ranging from six to eight weeks. Then, under a medical professional's observation, a patient will gradually reintroduce certain FODMAP containing foods. During the reintroduction period, it is vital to keep track of signs and symptoms of gastrointestinal distress in order to help identify food offenders.

Reintroduction is important because over-restriction can cause harm too. Cutting too many fruits, vegetables, plant-based proteins and dairy foods from the diet can lead to increased risk of deficiencies in nutrients such as fiber, minerals such as calcium, protein (for vegetarians or vegans) and vitamins A, C and D. A registered dietitian nutritionist can help manage the reintroduction phase by developing an eating plan that meets an individual's nutrient needs. Remember, this is a *low* FODMAP diet, not a *no* FODMAP diet; it is a highly individualized therapy that was designed to help manage symptoms, not to cure them completely.

Reviewed June 2019 by Kristi King, MPH, RDN, CNSC, LD. Published August, 2, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



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## Tips for Healthy Post-Partum Weight Loss



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As if there weren't enough to think about with a new baby, many moms experience anxiety about losing pregnancy weight after childbirth. While women may be hard on themselves in a world of instant gratification and celebrity obsession, it's best to concentrate on planning for a healthy rate of weight loss.

Not surprisingly, prevention is the best strategy. Mothers still in the planning stages, who are at a normal weight according to their body mass index, should strive to gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy (25 to 35 pounds), making it a little easier to rebound post-partum.

The first several months post-partum, however, is not the ideal time for a drastic weight-loss program. Recovery should be the priority the first month after pregnancy. Staying hydrated and eating nutritious meals and snacks will help the body rebuild after the trauma of childbirth.

The most healthful and sustainable strategy to return to pre-pregnancy weight is by making gradual, changes in eating habits.



## *Choosing Right*

As a new mom, or even if this isn't your first rodeo, you'll need plenty of energy to take care of baby. Choosing the right foods — fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein foods and low-fat or fat-free dairy — is especially important if you are breast-feeding. To ensure adequate milk supply, you'll need to meet your energy needs and include essential nutrients. While the body can use some of the calories stored as fat that built up during pregnancy, moms who breast-feed exclusively still need about 400 to 500 more calories a day.

Rather than count calories, focus on choosing foods that are nutrient-rich. If you gained more than 35 pounds during your pregnancy, it may take up to a year or more to lose the weight, but you can do it!

### *6 Tips for Mom's Healthy Meal Plan*

- Don't skip meals.
- Drink at least 8 to 12 glasses of water. If you have trouble remembering, get into the habit of filling a tall glass of water to keep with you all day.
- Strive for 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily, or 1,300 mg daily for women who are 18 or younger. You can get this easily by consuming three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy throughout the day.
- Consume at least 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables daily.
- Include lean sources of protein at each meal.
- Plan healthy snacks (fresh fruit, unsalted nuts, Greek yogurt with granola, hummus with vegetables, or a protein bar).

### *Getting Back to Being Physically Active*

After recovering from delivery (which may take a couple months), walking may be the perfect post-partum activity because it's easy to do, low impact and can include baby. You can incorporate weightlifting or a resistance routine (such as yoga or using exercise bands) once you regain your strength and your baby is a little older, but to start, aim for a daily 2- to 4-mile walk with your baby and stroller.

### *Avoiding Weight Loss Fads*

After bringing your baby home from the hospital, it's easy to slip into the "I want to lose weight fast!" mentality. Some quick weight loss plans may be tempting as you stand (often sleep-deprived) in the grocery store check-out line, and see images of slim celebrity moms splashed onto the covers of popular magazines. Say no to fad diets and focus on balanced nutrition and enjoyable exercise to promote your recovery and the health of your baby, instead.

Reviewed July 2019 by Rosanne Rust, MS, RDN LDN. Published August, 5, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



# Iodine, A Critically Important Nutrient



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An essential mineral, iodine is used by the thyroid gland to make thyroid hormones that control many functions in the body including growth and development. Because your body does not produce iodine, it needs to be supplied in the diet. When iodine intake is poor, the body cannot produce enough thyroid hormones.

Iodine deficiency in pregnancy is a worldwide problem and has become a global public health concern since it is identified as the leading cause of preventable brain damage in newborns and infants due to inadequate intake by mothers and infants. Major international efforts are being made to help reduce the problem, mainly through the use of iodized salt and supplements.

Until the early 1900s, iodine deficiency was a common problem in the United States but was significantly improved with the addition of iodine to table salt. Hypothyroidism, thyroid gland enlargement (goiter) and weight gain are other conditions that may result from too little iodine in the diet. Many pregnant women in the U.S. continue to have insufficient iodine intakes, especially those who have low intakes of dairy, seafood and iodized salt.

## **Iodine and the Brain**

With iodine deficiency listed as the leading cause of mental retardation around the world, iodine is an important component for healthy brain development. The most damaging consequences are on fetal and infant development of the brain when deficiency can cause irreversible brain damage that lasts a lifetime. Brain damage, cretinism, mental retardation and other conditions are additional risks.

It is a crucial nutrient throughout life, but especially during pregnancy, infancy and childhood when thyroid hormones regulate growth in the developing brain. Less severe iodine deficiency manifests as below average IQ in children, including impaired brain function in adults too. During childhood, iodine deficiency is often associated with goiter and also linked to reduced intellectual and motor performance, as well as an increased risk for ADHD in children.

## **Iodine Requirements**

A teaspoon of iodine is all a person requires in a lifetime, but because iodine cannot be stored for long periods, small amounts are needed regularly. The Institute of Medicine, or IOM, recommended dietary allowances for iodine are:

- 1 to 8 years old: 90 micrograms
- 9 to 13 years old: 120 micrograms
- 14 years and older: 150 micrograms
- Pregnant: 220 micrograms
- Lactating: 290 micrograms

## **Best Sources of Iodine**

Iodine fortification is what most countries rely on to encourage adequate dietary intake. In the more than 70 countries that iodize salt, it generally serves as the major source of iodine intake. One-fourth of a teaspoon of iodized salts has about 100 micrograms of iodine. Note that the salt used in processed foods, which is the major source of salt for most Americans, typically does not contain iodine. If salt used in a processed food contains iodine, it will be listed in the ingredients list of that food. Focus on decreasing the amount of salt consumed from processed foods and get your sodium from iodized salt.

Seaweed, salt water fish and seafood are natural sources of dietary iodine. Dairy products also supply iodine in the diet at varying levels. During lactation, the breast concentrates iodine in milk, so breast milk tends to be a good source of iodine as long as the mother's iodine intake is adequate.

Plants grown in iodine-rich soil are also good sources; however, this is not a reliable source of iodine since there is no way of knowing whether produce purchased in grocery stores is grown in iodine-rich soil.

Iodized salt usually adds less than about 300 micrograms iodine daily to the diet. Most multivitamin mineral supplements contain 150 micrograms of iodine. With the safe upper limit of daily iodine intake for adults set at 1,100 micrograms by the IOM, it is unlikely to hit an excess amount when including a multivitamin and including natural sources of dietary iodine.

The trend of eating less table salt, dairy and bread has some experts concerned that iodine deficiency could be on the rise again. Eating a healthy, balanced diet that includes iodine-rich foods and iodized salt is key to good health. Prenatal vitamins containing iodine can help meet nutritional needs for pregnant and lactating mothers.

If you suspect you are not getting enough iodine, [consult a registered dietitian nutritionist](#).

Reviewed June 2019 by Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD, LD. Published July 31, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

## Teach Your Teen About Nutrition Facts Panels



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If decoding the information on a food package is a challenge for adults, think of how hard it is for teens who are just beginning to make choices for themselves. Give your teens help as they become more aware of what they're putting in their bodies.

### **Narrow the Focus**

A wealth of information greets a health-conscious label reader in the Nutrition Facts portion of a food package. Focusing on just a few nutrients can make label reading more manageable for young consumers. For instance, encouraging teens to focus on foods rich in fiber could be one place to start. Fiber is found naturally in a variety of healthful foods including whole grains, fruits, vegetables and beans. For foods to limit, have teens watch out for those with lots of

added sugars and salt. Candy, soda, baked goods, chips and other popular snack foods have few valuable nutrients.

## **Portion Distortion**

For a teenager-sized appetite, a single portion often doesn't satisfy. Some teens could consume an entire bag of chips or a bottle of soda that actually contains several portions better suited for splitting between friends. Encourage them to get in tune with their bodies and listen to their internal hunger and fullness cues. Teens are growing and need both calories and nutrients. Focusing on nutrient-rich foods — fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean protein, low-fat dairy and whole grains — will help your teen fill up without overdoing it on calories, fat, sugar and salt.

## **Health Claims: Too Good to be True?**

Assertions that manufacturers make about their foods often send mixed messages. Who would guess that a sugar-loaded cereal could be a source of whole grains, or that a fruit-flavored beverage could boost immunity? Teach your teen to investigate further when the message on the front of the package is questionable. Studying the Nutrition Facts label helps determine whether or not it's a healthful choice. Eating disorders are more common during the teen years, especially for teen girls. If your teen becomes obsessed with reading Nutrition Facts Labels and overly restrictive about food, discuss what makes a balanced healthy lifestyle and consider calling the [National Eating Disorders Association Helpline](#).

## **Making Good Choices Away from Home**

With teens' increased independence, parents often are no longer in control of what they eat. Instilling general principles of healthy eating will help guide teens when they're out and about. Mobile apps and other online tools may motivate a teen to be mindful of eating habits. For example, they could use reminders to drink plenty of water and get their daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

There's no question that your teenagers will indulge in less-than-nutritious choices along the way, but continue to encourage them to take ownership of their health — it will pay off!



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## Now is the Time to Build Your Child's Bone "Bank Account"



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Your child's bone health might not be your first concern when you think of how optimal nutrition impacts your kids' health. After all, osteoporosis largely affects older adults. But, with adolescents reaching 90 percent of their peak bone mass by age 18 (for girls) and age 20 (for boys), bone health absolutely is a health issue for kids.

Think of bone health as a savings account. Bone is living tissue that is turned over constantly with regular deposits and withdrawals. During childhood and adolescence, bones are primed to make the highest rate of deposits possible, for use throughout the rest of a person's life.

### What Builds Healthy Bones?

Many nutrients work in concert to provide the framework for healthy bones. Calcium lies at the forefront, but vitamin D, magnesium, vitamin K and regular physical activity also are important.

### Calcium

Aim for a good calcium source in each meal and snack. Milk, cheese and yogurt are the richest natural sources of calcium. For instance, one 8-ounce glass of milk provides 300 milligrams of calcium, or about

one-fourth to one-third of the recommended daily intake. Other non-dairy food sources include almonds, broccoli, kale, turnip greens, figs and tofu prepared with calcium. Some foods and beverages are fortified with calcium, including certain juices, cereals and plant-based beverages.

## **Vitamin D**

Sun exposure triggers vitamin D production, but this can vary greatly with skin pigmentation, season and geography. If you live in the northern United States, there is a good chance you won't get enough sun exposure in winter for adequate vitamin D production. Also, sunlight exposure increases the risk of skin cancer and sunscreen blocks vitamin D production. There are just a few natural food sources of vitamin D, including egg yolks and fatty fish such as salmon and tuna. You can find vitamin D in fortified sources such as orange juice, milk and some non-dairy beverages. Talk with your pediatrician about giving kids vitamin D supplements to reach the recommended 600 IU per day.

## **Magnesium**

Look for sources of this mineral in foods such as almonds, spinach, black beans, oats, peanut butter, avocado and potato.

## **Vitamin K**

Leafy green vegetables, such as kale, turnip greens, cabbage, spinach and broccoli, are rich in vitamin K. A small amount of vitamin K is made from bacteria in the colon but it's unclear how much our bodies are able to produce and use, so it's important to include food sources.

## **Physical Activity**

Regular weight-bearing exercise stimulates bones and makes them stronger. Try activities such as running, hiking, dancing, tennis, gymnastics, basketball, volleyball, soccer and weight training to build bones. While swimming and bicycling are great for cardiovascular health, they are not weight-bearing. If these are your child's preferred sports, encourage them to do weight-bearing activities, too.

## **Be Mindful of These Bad-for-Bone Actions**

Just as important as what kids do to promote bone health is what they don't do. Bone health can be compromised in these critical years by:

- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Dieting and disordered eating
- Undereating for athletic training which can result in compromised hormonal status
- Absent or missed menstrual periods

Undereating during times of athletic training may result in compromised hormonal status, which can impact bone health. And females that have missed or irregular menstrual periods are also at risk. Children and adolescents that receive the best interplay of nutrients and physical activity, while avoiding practices that harm bones, can maximize their bone saving potential.

Reviewed June 2019 by Sarah Klemm, RD, CD. Published September 6, 2019. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).