



A Kitchen Makeover for the New Year



If you really want to change your family's eating habits, you need to build a healthy kitchen. Here's how to give your kitchen a makeover.

- **Make a List**

What foods would you like to ensure are in your house? Make a list and bring it to the grocery store.

- **Consider Some Changes**

Could you buy whole-wheat bread instead of white? How about low-fat milk instead of whole milk? You don't have to make every change right away if you're not ready. Ease yourself and your family into healthier ingredients one at a time.

- **Do the Math**

How many people are in your family? If each person should eat a minimum of two pieces of fruit per day and there are four in your family, that means you need eight pieces of fruit in your house for a day. Do the same calculation with other food groups so you know how much to buy.

- **Embrace the Can**

Many canned foods retain as much nutrient value as their fresh or frozen counterparts. Choosing canned fruits, vegetables, beans and meats can lighten the burden on your pocketbook and ensure these healthy foods are on hand in a pinch.

- **Change the Environment**

Once you bring your groceries home, make healthy foods more inviting. Fill a fruit bowl with fresh fruit you just purchased. Clean and cut fresh vegetables right away and put them in plastic bags so they are convenient to grab and eat.



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Make Resolutions Stick: Focus on Family



Want to stick to your New Year's resolutions – and help your kids to stick to theirs? You're the greatest role model for your child, so make 2014 the year to not only make healthy choices, but also model a healthy lifestyle and eating habits for your family.

Dedicate yourself to a healthy lifestyle in 2014 with healthy behaviors and small changes, they really will add up over time:

- Serve regular, balanced meals and snacks with a variety of nutrient-rich foods.
- Fuel up the family for the day with a nutritious breakfast.
- Focus on health, not weight. Don't talk about your weight or put yourself down in front of your kids. You don't want them to think a healthy lifestyle is only about how much they weigh.
- Enjoy family dinner together each night or as often as possible.
- At each meal, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Make at least half of the grains you eat whole grains.
- Get active. Fit in physical activity where you can in your day, whether taking a family walk after dinner or hitting the gym. Remember, children and teens should get 60 or more minutes of physical activity per day, and adults should get two and a half hours per week.
- Make simple food safety, like washing hands, part of every eating occasion.
- Stay positive and try not to complain about how much you dislike exercising or eating healthy foods; your child is listening to everything you say, even if you think they're ignoring you.
- Seek help from a qualified health professional. A registered dietitian nutritionist is your best source of reliable and up-to-date food and nutrition information.

Remember, small steps can turn into greater strides towards a healthier lifestyle.

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Eat Smarter: 3 Tips for Healthier Eating



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Do you ever feel as though a sweet tooth or craving for salty foods is holding you back from your health goals? The good news is that with a few simple changes to your eating and cooking habits, you can still eat right while including these occasional treats.

Start building a smarter plate by choosing fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy — foods that are packed with the nutrients you need without all the added sugars and solid fats. In addition, you can help reduce your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke by eating less sodium.

Unsure where to start? Here are tips for building a smarter plate.

Eat Fewer Foods High in Solid Fats

- Opt for lean ground beef, turkey and chicken. Cut back on processed meats such as hot dogs, salami and bacon.
- Grill, broil, bake or steam foods instead of frying.
- Cook with healthy oils such as olive, canola and sunflower oils in place of partially-hydrogenated oils or butter.
- Select low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese.

Choose Foods and Drinks with Little or No Added Sugars

- Switch to water, low-fat or fat-free milk or 100-percent fruit juice in moderate amounts.
- For additional taste, add lemons, limes or cucumbers to water or drink unsweetened carbonated water.
- Eat fresh fruit for dessert instead of cakes, cookies or pastries.

- Buy foods with little-to-no added sugars, including unsweetened applesauce or unsweetened whole-grain cereals.

Cut Back on Sodium

- Instead of salt, use herbs and spices to season foods.
- Do not add salt when cooking pasta, rice and vegetables.
- Read the Nutrition Facts Label to compare the sodium content of high-sodium foods such as pre-made foods, frozen meals, bread, canned soups and vegetables.

For more information on healthful changes you can make to your eating plan, consult a registered dietitian nutritionist in your area.



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How Sleep Habits Affect Healthy Weight



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If you think your child gets enough sleep, you may be incorrect. According to the National Sleep Foundation, most children sleep less than their parents realize. And nearly 70 percent of children have some sleep problem such as waking during the night, sleeping too little or having difficulty falling asleep at least a few nights each week.

Sacrificing Sleep

Emerging research suggests that sleep is just as important as nutrition and exercise are to your child's health – and we're talking about more than colds and the flu. Scientists aren't sure why, but too little sleep is linked with both packing on extra pounds and developing Type 2 diabetes, explains Amy Jamieson-Petonic, MEd, RD, CSSD, LD past spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2005 to 2014) and director of wellness coaching at Cleveland Clinic's Wellness Institute. Researchers have observed this weight effect in kids of all ages – even infants, toddlers and preschoolers. One theory for weight gain is that inadequate sleep disrupts hormone levels that regulate appetite and food intake. Thus, too little sleep means bigger portions of foods and more snacking, Jamieson-Petonic explains.

When kids are overextended in activities, weighted down with homework, constantly texting or plugged into the Internet and other technology, something has to give. Unfortunately, it's frequently an hour or two of shut-eye that gets knocked from the priority list. Sleepy kids lack the energy and

focus for playing outside and doing schoolwork. They're more likely to sit in front of the TV where they burn few calories and challenge neither their minds nor their bodies, says registered dietitian Marilyn Tanner-Blasiar, past spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2003 to 2012).

Set a Routine

The good news is that you can help kids sleep better and longer. If they're involved in too many activities, set priorities for young children and help older children set their own. Limit afterschool clubs and sports to a manageable number. Finally, create a bedtime routine such as dinner, bath, massage and a story, urges Jamieson-Petonic. Routines help kids – and adults – ease into a night's slumber. Bedtime routines should always include at least a few minutes of downtime such as reading a book or telling a story to small children. Older kids may enjoy reading to themselves or to you. Teens might like a few minutes chatting with parents or journaling about their day. As hard as it might be, keep the phone and texting out of bed; and avoid exercise, television and the Internet shortly before bedtime. Find the schedule that works for you and your children, and do your best to stick to it every night, urges Tanner-Blasiar.



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7 Tips for Healthy Dining Out



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Eating at a restaurant doesn't have to sabotage your healthy diet. Use smart-eating strategies: Plan ahead, consider the menu and choose foods carefully.

Preparation

Have a plan. Eat a light dinner if you ate a big lunch that day. Or, if you know ahead of time that you're going to a restaurant, plan to have lighter meals during the day. Knowing menu terms and cooking basics makes ordering easier, especially if you have special dietary needs.

Choosing a Restaurant

Think ahead. Consider meal options at different restaurants and look for places with a wide range of menu items. Check online menus, if available, for nutrition information ahead of time.

Ordering

Be deliberate when ordering. Balance your meal by including healthier selections from all the different food groups such as lean protein foods, low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Look for freshly made entrée salads that give you "balance in a bowl." For example, entrée salads with baked or grilled chicken, beans or seafood provide protein along with fiber and other nutrients. Ask for dressing on the side so you can control the portion size.

For sandwich toppings, go with veggie options including lettuce, tomato, avocado and onion; if using condiments, choose ketchup, mustard, relish or salsa.

Round out your meal by ordering healthy side dishes, such as a side salad, baked potato or fruit. Boost the nutritional value of your baked potato by topping it with vegetables, salsa or chili.

Substitute. Ask for a side salad with dressing on the side to replace fries in a combination meal. Many restaurants honor requests, so don't be afraid to be assertive, ask menu questions and make special requests to meet your nutritional needs.

Control portions. Many restaurants serve huge portions, sometimes enough for two or three people. Eat a smaller portion and bring leftovers home for another meal.

Eating

Eat slowly. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you are no longer hungry. Fast eaters often are overeaters, while slow eaters tend to eat less and are still satisfied.

Eating Out with Kids

Choose a restaurant that caters to children. This will increase the likelihood that a restaurant has a healthy children's menu that includes smaller portion sizes and meals designed to provide ample nourishment for smaller bodies.

For new foods, offer a bite or two from your order. Otherwise, let kids order their familiar favorites when they eat out. Pick two or three suitable menu items and then let your child pick one. Substitute healthier sides in place of fries, such as carrots or apple slices, or share an order of fries, and order plain foods with sauce on the side.

Calcium is important at all ages, but especially for growing bones. To get more calcium, opt for plain milk for a beverage, or add a slice of cheese to their sandwich. Choose dairy-based desserts such as yogurt or a smoothie.

Restaurants may be intimidating to people trying to stick to a healthy eating plan, but with preparation and confidence you can enjoy your restaurant meal without abandoning healthy eating.

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Food Sources of 5 Important Nutrients for Vegetarians



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No matter which category of vegetarian you fall into, it is important to choose a variety of foods, including whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds. Using the [MyPlate tips for vegetarians](#) can help you make sure you are meeting your nutritional needs each day.

Calcium

Vegetarians should consume a variety of calcium sources in order to meet daily requirements.

Dairy products are a rich source of calcium. If your diet does not include dairy products, calcium can be obtained from some plant-based foods, but the amount of calcium that the body can absorb from these foods varies. Here is a list of vegetarian-friendly sources of calcium:

- Low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese
- Fortified plant-based milks such as soy or almond
- Fortified ready-to-eat cereals
- Calcium-fortified juice
- Calcium-set tofu
- Some leafy green vegetables including collard greens, turnip greens and kale
- Broccoli
- Beans including soybeans, chickpeas and black beans
- Almonds and almond butter

Iron

Vegetarians should consume a variety of iron sources to meet daily requirements. Consuming a good source of vitamin C (citrus fruits, orange juice, tomatoes) at each meal increases iron absorption.

Sources include:

- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Soybeans
- Some dark leafy greens including spinach and chard
- Beans
- Eggs

Protein

Protein is found in most plant foods as well as animal foods. Your body will make its own complete protein if a variety of foods and enough calories are eaten during the day.

Vegetarian sources of protein include:

- Legumes such as beans, peas and lentils
- Whole grains
- Soy products
- Nuts and nut butters
- Dairy products
- Eggs

Vitamin B₁₂

B₁₂ is found in all foods of animal origin, including eggs and dairy products. An adequate intake of vitamin B₁₂ is generally not a concern for vegetarians who eat some dairy products or eggs. Vegans, however, need to supplement their diet by choosing foods fortified with vitamin B₁₂ or by taking a vitamin B₁₂ (cobalamin) supplement.

Vegetarian sources of B₁₂ include:

- Vitamin B₁₂-fortified foods including nutritional yeast, soy milk, meat analogs and ready-to-eat cereals (be sure to check the label).
- Dairy products
- Eggs

Vitamin D

Few foods are naturally high in vitamin D, but many dairy products are fortified with vitamin D in the United States. People who choose not to eat dairy products and who do not receive exposure to sunlight on a regular basis should discuss the need to take a vitamin D supplement with their health care provider.

Vegetarian sources of vitamin D include:

- Eggs
- Vitamin D-fortified soy milk, cow's milk, orange juice and ready-to-eat cereals

Information provided by Vegetarian Nutrition, a dietetic practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



The Best Gift is a Healthy Heart



February 14th is Valentine's Day, and the best gift you can give your kids is nutrition for a healthy heart!

Compelling research suggests that fatty buildup in arteries begins in childhood and is more likely with higher blood cholesterol levels. For that reason, the American Heart Association offers advice for children and teens about these related health risks:

- Cigarette smoking: Discourage it.
- High blood pressure: Identify and treat it.
- Obesity: Prevent it or reduce weight.
- Diabetes: Diagnose and treat it.
- Inactivity: Encourage regular aerobic exercise (30 to 60 minutes) on most days of the week. At the same time, kids need to eat enough fruits and vegetables each day, and choose foods that are low in saturated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol.

For cardiovascular health, young people, ages 2 through 19 years, should maintain acceptable blood cholesterol levels:

Levels	Total Cholesterol (mg/dL)	LDL Cholesterol (mg/dL)
High	200 or greater	130 or greater
Borderline	170 to 199	100 to 129
Acceptable	Less than 170	Less than 100

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How to Use a Food Thermometer



Ryan McVay/Stockbyte/Thinkstock

The only way to know that food is cooked to the correct temperature and eliminate harmful bacteria that may be present is to use a food thermometer. However, a food thermometer is only helpful if you are using it properly. Follow these simple steps to ensure you are correctly using a food thermometer:

- **Step 1: Buy a food thermometer.** Digital or manual; pop-up or instant-read; there are many types of food thermometers. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for the food thermometer you use.
- **Step 2: Test your food thermometer.** Use either the ice water or boiling water method to confirm your food thermometer reading is accurate. Be sure to calibrate your thermometer. According to a recent University of California – Davis study, home food thermometers can read up to 30°F off because they are not calibrated.
- **Step 3: Place food thermometer properly.** Food thermometer placement is very important to get an accurate reading. Place the food thermometer in the thickest part of the food, making sure not to touch bone, fat or gristle.
- **Step 4: Wait the recommended amount of time for your type of thermometer.** For meat products including raw beef, pork, lamb, veal steaks, chops and roasts, use the food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming.
- **Step 5: Know the safe internal temperature.** Using a food thermometer is only half the equation.
- **Step 6: Clean your food thermometer with hot, soapy water after each use.** This prevents cross-contamination and the spread of harmful bacteria.



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9 Nutrition Tips for Young Men



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For many young men, nutrition isn't always a focus. There are many transitions going on at this point in life. Busy schedules and new environments can lead to unhealthy eating habits such as skipping meals or snacks, eating nothing but fast food, overeating, and drinking excessive amounts of sugar-sweetened beverages or alcohol. Along with inconsistent eating patterns, young men may experience weight gain or a lack of energy.

Making healthy choices to fuel a young, active mind and body starts with balance. Follow a healthy eating plan featuring lean protein, vegetables and whole-grains. Have fruit and low-fat dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt for snacks. By eating well now, you can lessen your risk of health-related problems later. Try these nine healthy changes:

Eat Breakfast Every Day

The first meal you eat in the morning truly "breaks the fast" and gets your metabolism moving for the day. Don't skip it!

Snack

A midmorning and midafternoon snack will help you avoid overeating at meals and alleviate energy lows throughout the day.

Eat Vegetables and Fruits

Aim for at least two cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables every day. Grab an apple, peach or pear for the road. Take sliced fruit for a snack. Put lettuce and tomato on a sandwich or order a salad.

Make Protein Count

Young men need protein to fuel developing muscles. Choose low-fat protein sources. Eat less red meat and more chicken, turkey and pork. Eat fish at least two times a week. Regularly eat plant-based proteins such as tofu, beans and peas.

Add in Healthy Fats

Be selective with the fat you eat. Limit fries, onion rings and nachos. Eat heart-healthy fat sources such as olive oil, canola oil, walnuts, almonds and avocado.

Calcium

Young men need 1,000 milligrams of calcium each day for bone and tooth health. What young men do prior to age 30 is crucial to having healthy bones for life. Food is your best source of calcium. Aim for three servings of low-fat dairy products, such as milk, yogurt or cheese every day.

Vitamin D

You also need vitamin D good for bone health. Especially if there is little to no fortified milk or fish in your diet, consider a supplement containing at least 600 IU.

Iron-Rich Foods

Iron is important for energy. You likely can get enough iron by eating iron-fortified cereal, leafy greens or a handful of raisins each day. Young men need just eight milligrams of iron per day. Women need more iron than men.

Get Active

Most young men do not need an excuse to get active. For healthy bones, weight management and overall good health, get at least 30 minutes of weight-bearing activity most days of the week. To build muscle, strength train with weights or resistance bands at least two to three times a week.

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Spring Cleaning 101



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Spring is just around the corner, which means flowers, warmer weather and of course spring cleaning.

"Spring cleaning is a great opportunity to give the kitchen a good food safety check and cleaning, especially refrigerators and freezers where raw meat, poultry and seafood is stored," says registered dietitian nutritionist Karen Ansel, MS, RDN, CDN.

Ansel shares simple steps to help reduce cross contamination in the kitchen, and minimize the risk of food poisoning.

Kitchen Surfaces

"Illness-causing bacteria can survive in many places around the kitchen, not just on hands alone," Ansel says. "Unless people wash their hands, utensils and surfaces the *right* way, they could unintentionally spread bacteria to their food and family."

- Keep countertops clean by washing with hot soapy water before and after preparing food. Clean surfaces and utensils with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Keep kitchen surfaces — such as appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils — clean with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item. Keeping cutting boards and surfaces clean, and following proper sponge safety, helps prevent cross-contamination.

Refrigerator

"Everything that comes in contact with food must be kept clean all year long to reduce cross-contamination, including the refrigerator," Ansel says. "Spring is the perfect time to set regular cleaning routines."

- Check that the refrigerator temperature is set to below 40°F.
- Keep the refrigerator clean at all times; this is a good time to look for unnoticed spills and remove lingering odors. Wipe up spills and clean surfaces with hot, soapy water and rinse well.
- To keep the refrigerator smelling fresh and help eliminate odors, place an opened box of baking soda on a shelf. Avoid using solvent cleaning agents, abrasives and any cleansers that may impart a chemical taste to food or ice cubes, or cause damage to the interior finish of your refrigerator. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Shelf life

"Whether in the pantry or refrigerator, it's important to make sure food items haven't spoiled," Ansel says. "Remember – when in doubt, toss it out!"

- This is a good time of year to use or throw away foods that are losing their quality or have spoiled, for both refrigerated and non-refrigerated items in the pantry. For a detailed listing of the shelf-life of foods, as well as a kitchen safety quiz, download the free "[Is My Food Safe?](#)" [app](#).
- Make spring the time to begin new food safety habits. Once a week, make it a habit to throw out perishable foods that should no longer be eaten.

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Make a Fresh Start with Spring Foods



Spring is a great time to hit the reset button and reintroduce some fresh foods into your kids' diet after a long winter. [Get into the swing of spring produce with these four seasonal favorites.](#)

Spinach

Spinach is called a superfood for a reason: It's packed with vitamins A and C, which are essential for eye health, immune function and many other body processes. Vitamin K helps build strong bones. Spinach also contains folate and iron, which help prevent anemia. The magnesium and potassium are important for muscle development and growth.

If your kids are on-board with green stuff, serve spinach salads or add it to smoothies. Serve it sautéed with meat and fish. For veggie avoiders, the mild flavor of spinach is easily masked. Just puree and mix it into sauces, soups and meatballs.

Yogurt

A calcium-rich food, yogurt is important for building strong bones and teeth. At eight grams per 6 ounce container, yogurt is also a great source of protein. Greek yogurt has up to twice that much, however it provides less calcium. Yogurt is also a good source of probiotic bacteria, which can promote good digestion and immune system function.

"Have your kids help make yogurt parfaits by layering yogurt, cereal and fruit," suggests Lisa Brown, MS, RD, CDN, a registered dietitian in New York City. "If your kids are adventurous, have them top their pancakes and waffles with yogurt and fruit instead of syrup."

Strawberries

Loaded with vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, fresh strawberries are a seasonal superstar. Just one cup provides more than a day's worth of vitamin C, plus a hearty dose of manganese, which is important for bone development. A serving of strawberries also packs three grams of fiber.

Strawberries are great eaten plain or with other foods. "Sweet and colorful, berries are a great addition to smoothies, cereal and yogurt," says Brown.

Asparagus

Asparagus is an excellent source of bone-building vitamin K as well as folate. It also provides vitamin A and iron. Available in green, purple and white varieties, asparagus spears are fun to eat and go with all kinds of foods.

Pediatric nutritionist Laura Gibofsky, MS, RD, CDN, suggests rolling asparagus in egg and panko crumbs and baking on a cookie sheet as a kid-friendly prep method. You can also add Parmesan cheese to the panko crumbs for a cheesy variation. Serve with teriyaki or tomato sauce for dipping or even a small amount of low-fat ranch dressing. This is also a great way to prepare broccoli, and is easy enough for the kids to help prepare. "Getting kids involved in the kitchen will make them more likely to try new foods," Gibofsky says.



Hydrate Right During Physical Activity



Proper hydration is one of the most important aspects of healthy physical activity. Drinking the right amount of fluids before, during and after physical activity is vital to providing your body the fluids it needs to perform properly. Sports dietitians assist athletes by developing individualized hydration plans that enhance performance in training and competition while minimizing risks for dehydration, over-hydration and heat illness and injury.

Hydration Goal

The overall goal is to minimize dehydration without over-drinking. Adequate hydration varies among individuals. Practical ways to monitor hydration are:

- *Urine color.* The color of the first morning's urine void after awakening is an overall indicator of hydration status. Straw or lemonade colored urine is a sign of appropriate hydration. Dark colored urine, the color of apple juice, indicates dehydration. Dark urine is often produced soon after consuming vitamin supplements.
- *Sweat loss.* Change in body weight before and after exercise is used to estimate sweat loss. Since an athlete's sweat loss during exercise is an indicator of hydration status, athletes are advised to follow customized fluid replacement plans that consider thirst, urine color, fluid intake, sweat loss and body weight changes that occur during exercise.

Minimize Dehydration

Dehydration can occur in virtually every physical activity scenario. It doesn't have to be hot. You don't have to have visible perspiration. You can become dehydrated in the water, at a pool or lake, or skiing on a winter day.

Dehydration results when athletes fail to adequately replace fluid lost through sweating. Since dehydration that exceeds 2 percent body weight loss harms exercise performance, athletes are advised to begin exercise well hydrated, minimize dehydration during exercise and replace fluid losses after exercise.

Be alert for conditions that increase your fluid loss through sweat.

- *Air Temperature:* The higher the temperature, the greater your sweat losses.
- *Intensity:* The harder you work out, the more you perspire.
- *Body Size and Gender:* Larger people sweat more. Men generally sweat more than women.
- *Duration:* The longer the workout, the more fluid loss.
- *Fitness:* Well-trained athletes perspire more than less fit people. Why? Athletes cool their bodies through sweat more efficiently than most people because their bodies are used to the extra stress. Thus, fluid needs are higher for highly trained athletes than for less fit individuals.

Remember swimmers sweat, too. Like any athletic activity, when you swim, your body temperature rises and your body sweats to keep from overheating. You may not notice because you are in the water, but you can become dehydrated. Swimmers, from competitive athletes to families splashing around, need to drink fluids before, during and after swimming, even if you don't feel thirsty.

Warning Signs

Know the signs of dehydration. Early signs are:

- Thirst
- Flushed skin
- Premature fatigue
- Increased body temperature
- Faster breathing and pulse rate
- Increased perception of effort
- Decreased exercise capacity

Later signs include:

- Dizziness
- Increased weakness
- Labored breathing with exercise

Fluid Replacement

Replace fluids during exercise to promote adequate hydration. Drink water rather than pouring it over your head. Drinking is the only way to rehydrate and cool your body from the inside out. Sports drinks are more appropriate than water for athletes engaged in moderate- to high-intensity exercise that lasts an hour or longer. Rehydrate after exercise by drinking enough fluid to replace fluid losses during exercise.

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Looking to Reduce Your Family's Intake of Added Sugars? Here's How



Photo: noblige/iStock/ThinkStock

High added sugar intake has been linked to everything from dental cavities to obesity to Type 2 diabetes to heart disease to other health conditions — many of which last into adulthood. Minimizing added sugars is a priority for many parents, but it's not as simple as trading cookies and soda for fruit and water. Avoiding obvious sources is one thing, but added sugar can be found in many foods where you may not expect it.

According to the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines*, added sugars include sugars, syrups and other caloric sweeteners. Simply put, added sugars sweeten a food — and although they add calories, they offer virtually no nutrition.

On a nutrition label, sugar may appear under many names — more than 50, actually. Some of the most common ones include cane sugar, evaporated cane juice, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, raw sugar and crystal solids. And, don't forget brown sugar, honey, maple syrup and brown rice syrup.

The 2015 *Dietary Guidelines* recommends Americans limit added sugars to no more than 10 percent of their daily calorie needs. That's about 12 teaspoons (48 grams of sugar) on a 2,000-calorie diet. But for kids — especially little kids, who may only need 1,200 to 1,400 calories per day — it's even less.

But, rather than obsessing over grams and teaspoons, focus on reducing added sugars by limiting products that contain them.

Common Sources of Added Sugars

Some sources of added sugars are easy to spot, such as:

- Sugary beverages (soda, fruit punch, sweet coffee and energy drinks)
- Sugary cereal
- Candy and chocolates
- Flavored yogurt
- Baked goods such as cakes, pastries and cookies

However, added sugars can hide in some surprising places, including:

- Whole-grain cereals and granola
- Instant oatmeal
- Frozen foods
- Granola bars, protein bars and cereal bars
- Pasta sauce
- Dried fruit, canned fruit, applesauce and fruit juices
- Baby food
- Barbecue sauce, ketchup, salad dressing and other condiments

Tips for Avoiding Added Sugars

The first step in reducing your family's added sugar intake takes place in the grocery store. Scan labels for added sweeteners and, instead, fill your shopping cart with healthier options. Sally Kuzemchak, MS, RD, a blogger and mother of two, recommends reaching for naturally sweet foods. Her favorites? "Fruit! Lots of veggies are naturally sweet too, especially bell peppers, carrots and sugar snap peas," she says.

When it comes to beverages, Kuzemchak recommends water and milk. "Many other beverages have ingredients kids don't need, like caffeine, added sugar and artificial dyes or sweeteners," says Kuzemchak.

You can also reduce added sugar intake at home by cooking from scratch. By making your own granola, pasta sauce and condiments and serving homemade baked treats, you are in control of the ingredients used. "With baking recipes, I frequently cut the sugar with no negative effect to the recipe or to how much my family likes it," Kuzemchak says. "I usually start by cutting it by a quarter and go lower if possible."

One common source of added sugar is flavored yogurt. You can start reducing added sugar intake from yogurt by mixing half a serving of flavored yogurt with half a serving of plain, unsweetened yogurt. This trick works with cereal too. As your family's taste buds adjust, gradually use less and less of the sweetened varieties.

Make a healthy relationship with food the overall focus instead of a completely sugar-free diet. Encourage positive associations with foods such as fruits and vegetables by playing up their good qualities and fresh taste — and save the sweet stuff for special occasions.

Reviewed November 2016 by Jessica Cording, MS, RD, CDN. Published December 7, 2016. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.