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Tips for Choosing a Nutrient-Rich Diet



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You should enjoy the food you eat. In choosing nutrient-rich foods, you'll notice they are familiar, easy to find and represent the five basic food groups. Achieving balance and building a healthier eating pattern can be simple and low-stress.

Selecting nutrient-rich foods and beverages first is a way to make better choices within your daily eating plan. Choose first among the basic food groups:

- Brightly colored fruits
- Vibrantly colored vegetables including potatoes
- Whole-grain, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods
- Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt or fortified plant-based alternatives
- Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, soyfoods such as tofu and tempeh, beans, lentils and nuts

Here are some practical ways for you to add nutrient-rich foods and beverages to your daily diet.

- Make creamier oatmeal by adding fat-free milk or calcium-fortified soy milk instead of water. Stir in some walnuts and raisins too.
- Make sandwiches on whole-grain bread, such as whole wheat or whole rye. Add slices of avocado, tomato or cucumber to fillings such as lean roast beef, ham, turkey, chicken, tofu or mashed chickpeas.
- When dining out, look for nutrient-rich choices such as entrée salads with grilled seafood and oil-based dressing, baked potatoes topped with salsa, grilled vegetables and black beans, and vegetable stir-fry loaded with a rainbow of veggies and tofu served over brown rice.
- Choose nutrient-rich beverages such as low-fat or fat-free plain or flavored milk, calcium-fortified plant-based beverages.
- Top foods with chopped nuts and seeds to get crunch, flavor and nutrients from the first bite.
- Spend a few minutes washing and cutting vegetables so they are in easy reach for every family member — these include ready-to-eat favorites such as red, green or yellow peppers, broccoli or cauliflower florets, carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers, snap peas or whole radishes. Keep cut vegetables handy for mid-afternoon snacks, side dishes, lunch box additions or a quick nibble while waiting for dinner.
- Serve meals that pack multiple nutrient-rich foods into one dish, such as hearty, broth-based soups that are full of colorful vegetables, whole grains and beans. Make chili with a dollop of low-fat yogurt. Whip up beans and rice with canned tomatoes. Use chickpeas to make sliders with barbecue sauce on whole-grain buns. Throw together tacos with frozen shrimp, frozen corn, canned beans and canned pineapple.
- For dessert, try no-bake bars with whole-grain oats and dried fruit or a chocolaty smoothie with banana and peanut butter.