

Which fruits and vegetables are best?

The fact is that they're all good for you. When you eat many different types of fruits and vegetables, you'll get a variety of vitamins and minerals to support good health. The American Heart Association suggests filling half your plate with fruits and veggies as a way to meet the recommendation of 4½ cups of each every day.

All produce counts towards the goal of 9 cups, including canned, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. When shopping for canned or frozen fruit and vegetables, be sure to compare Nutrition Facts labels and choose the products with the lowest amount of sodium and added sugars.

All fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that may help prevent heart disease, cancer and other illnesses. Some of these nutrients are fiber, potassium, folate, and vitamins A and C. The best way to get more nutrients is to eat fruits and vegetables of many different colors. The five main color groups and examples in each group are listed on the Eat More Color infographic.

Here are some ways to include fruit and vegetables in your meals and snacks throughout the day:

Breakfast

Add fruit to whole-grain cereal, such as sliced bananas, raisins or dried unsweetened cranberries.

Add fruit to plain fat-free/low-fat yogurt or fat-free/low-fat cottage cheese such as berries, sliced cherries or pineapple.

Add fruit to oatmeal, such as sliced peaches, apples or pears.

Eat whole fruits. However, if you drink fruit or vegetable juice, keep your serving to ½ cup, and be sure it's labeled 100%. Skip fruit drinks, punches or fruit cocktails. They are often loaded with excess sodium and/or added sugar.

Add chopped vegetables, such as onions, bell peppers and/or spinach, to eggs.

Lunch

Choose a fruit or vegetable salad as your entree.

Bulk up a sandwich with vegetables, such as cucumber spears, sliced tomato, sliced avocado and dark green leafy lettuce.

Enjoy a bowl of soup that's full of vegetables. You can make easy soup recipes at home. If you buy canned soups, be sure to compare the Nutrition Facts labels and choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium.

Choose celery sticks or baby carrots with a dip as a side dish instead of chips.

Snacks

Wash and cut raw veggies, such as bell peppers, celery, carrots, radishes and broccoli, ahead of time so they're easy to grab for a snack. Pair them with a healthy dip.

Prepare snack bags with dried fruit, such as raisins, dates or unsweetened apricots and dry-roasted nuts, such as pecans, almonds and walnuts. (Although nutritious dried fruits and nuts are high in calories, so enjoy as a ¼ cup-serving.)

Keep grab-and-go fruit, such as grapes, cherries, oranges and bananas, easily available when you're on the run.

Enjoy eating frozen fruits or vegetables, such as grapes, peas or sliced bananas.

Dinner

Fill half your plate with vegetables and/or fruit.

Keep lots of frozen vegetables on hand. They can be easily steamed or microwaved within minutes while the entree is cooking.

Bake or roast vegetables, such as a sweet potato or asparagus if you're using the oven for an entree.

Always add extra chopped vegetables, such as sliced, celery, carrot rounds, chopped tomatoes or spinach, to any soup stew or sauce.

Stir in cooked frozen or leftover vegetables, such as peas, chopped asparagus or sliced mushrooms, halved Brussels sprouts, to cooked brown rice.

Throw some vegetables, such as sliced zucchini or yellow squash, corn on the cob, halved bell peppers, on the barbecue too when you're grilling chicken or another entree.

Make extra vegetables so you can easily have them again for another meal.

Conquer Cravings with These Healthy Substitutions

We have all experienced food cravings – and often those cravings have to do with texture, like something creamy or crunchy.

Food textures play a big role in whether we like or dislike certain foods. For example, while you may not like mushy canned peas, you may be surprised to realize that you like fresh or barely cooked peas.

Luckily, eating healthy includes foods of all sorts of textures and flavors. Here are some suggestions on satisfying your cravings with nutritious snacks of a variety of textures:

Creamy

Instead of this: While ice cream may come to mind first, there are a variety of other smooth snacks that can be just as satisfying.

Try munching on this:

- Fresh avocado spread on whole grain bread OR ½ avocado eaten plain with a spoon.

- Warm 1 tablespoon creamy peanut butter in the microwave for 10 seconds and drizzle over ½ cup low-fat, no added sugar frozen yogurt.
- Puree some berries and swirl them into a cup of low-fat yogurt with no sugar added.

Crunchy

Instead of this: Pretzels and chips have a crunchy texture that you may crave, but they can come with a lot of extra sodium that you don't need.

Try munching on this:

- ¾ cup whole grain cereal, no added sugar
- Crunchy unsalted nuts
- Whole grain crisp breads
- Plain popcorn; to add some flavor, experiment with various spices such as cinnamon or your favorite spice or herb.

Liquid

Instead of this: Sweet tea or soda may sound refreshing, but it can take a while to work off all those empty calories. A medium-sized fancy mocha coffee drink with whipped cream can be 400 calories, and that's before adding sugar or honey.

Try sipping on this:

- Plain iced tea made with a squeeze of lemon. You can sweeten it with berries or a noncaloric sweetener.
- Add fruit slices to a glass and fill with sparkling water or club soda.
- Instead of the fancy mocha drink, choose a small latte made with nonfat milk and topped with cinnamon, which is about a quarter of the calories.

Squishy

Instead of this: Jelly-like candies or even kids' "fruit" snacks might sound like squishy fun in your mouth, but other options pack more nutrition.

Try munching on this:

- Fresh grapes are sweet and juicy; freeze them for a few minutes for a fun texture.
- Make tapioca pudding with squishy tapioca pearls; follow the directions on the box. Use only half the amount of sugar or a noncaloric sweetener and fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Cherry tomatoes and room-temperature string cheese are squishy, stringy fun.

Crispy

Instead of this: Fresh, hot French fries may have the crispy texture that you may crave, but they can come with a lot of extra sodium, saturated fat and calories that you don't

need.

Try munching on this:

- Choose small red or white potatoes and cut them in half, toss with a little olive oil, sprinkle with your favorite herbs and roast in the oven or cook in an air fryer.
- Eat a crisp apple, such as a Braeburn, Honey Crisp, Fuji or Gala.
- Enjoy some fresh, vegetable sticks such as carrots, celery, or peppers.

Add Color

How to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables
colorful fruit and vegetables

All the Colors, All the Time

An easy first step to eating healthy is to include fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. All forms (fresh, frozen, canned and dried) and all colors count, so go ahead and add color to your plate – and your life.

sneaking more vegetables into meals
Sneaking More Vegetables into Meals

We all know we need to be eating more veggies. Some of us love them and eat them at every meal. And then there are those of us who can't stomach the thought of chomping on something green that looks like a tree. And no, we're not talking about four-year-olds – we mean adults, too!

Learn How to Sneak More Vegetables into Meals

How to Make a Hearty, Healthy Salad

When we hear “salad,” some people think lettuce tossed with a few vegetables. But salad can be so much more! In fact, it can easily become an inexpensive main meal with just a few additional ingredients.

Here are some building “blocks” to make a delicious and filling salad.

How to Eat More Fruit and Vegetables
colorful fruit and vegetables

Adding more fruit and vegetables can provide you a wide variety of health benefits, including weight management. Whether you cook at home or eat out, adding more colorful, nutritious and delicious vegetables and fruit into your snacks and meals is important for a healthy eating pattern.

Losing Weight

Lose Weight and Keep It Off

Why Lose Weight?

The benefits of maintaining a healthy weight go far beyond improved energy and smaller clothing sizes. By losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight, you are also likely to enjoy a higher quality-of-life too.

Groups of adults running outdoors

5 Steps to Lose Weight & Keep It Off

Learning to balance healthy eating and physical activity can help you lose weight more easily and keep it off.

Take it from people who have successfully maintained weight loss:

98% have modified their eating habits.

94% have increased their physical activity, especially walking.

5 Steps to Lose Weight and Keep It Off

Conquer Cravings with These Healthy Substitutions

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Food textures play a big role in whether we like or dislike certain foods. For example, while you may not like mushy canned peas, you may be surprised that you like fresh or barely cooked peas.

Luckily, eating healthy includes foods of all sorts of textures and flavors. Here are some suggestions on satisfying your cravings with nutritious snacks of a variety of textures.

Cooking For Weight Loss

Maintaining your ideal body weight is tough, no matter where you are in your weight loss journey. If you're overweight, losing even a few pounds can improve your health, so every step in the right direction counts! Use these tips to set yourself up for success.

Keeping a Healthy Body Weight

Eating When Not Hungry

A binge is when you eat a lot of food in a short time and it's usually not healthy food. Many people also eat when they are feeling upset, angry, stressed, sad, lonely or fearful. Emotions such as these can be powerful triggers to eat. Here are some tips to help you control binge, emotional and nighttime eating.

Why Do I Eat When I'm Not Hungry?

Binge eating

Does this sound like you — able to control your portions sometimes but losing control and uncontrollably eating large amounts of food at other times? This is called "binge eating," and lots of people do it.

A binge is when you eat a lot of food in a short time, and it's usually not healthy food. Binge eating is bad for you, especially if you have diabetes.

Emotional eating

Many people eat when they are feeling upset, angry, stressed, sad, lonely or fearful. Emotions such as these can be powerful triggers to eat.

If you're an emotional eater, you can learn healthier ways to react to your emotions. Emotions usually don't last long — become mindful of yourself not eating for a short time, until the emotion passes. Try going for a brisk walk around the block or doing some yoga instead.

Nighttime eating

For many people, dinner is only the start of their nighttime eating. There's nothing wrong with a healthy snack such as fruit, plain popcorn or whole-wheat toast with a little peanut butter a couple of hours after dinner. However, nighttime eating is a problem when you eat large amounts of food or foods high in saturated fat, sodium and calories such as cookies, chips, full-fat ice cream, sandwiches or leftovers.

If nighttime eating is a problem for you, try to eat most of your calories during daylight hours. Reach for a light, healthy snack in the evening.

Instead of

Try

Cookies

1 piece whole-wheat toast with peanut butter

Candy

1 piece fresh fruit

Chips

2 cups of plain popcorn

Cheese and crackers

½ cup fat-free or 1% cottage cheese with apple slices

Pizza

½ to 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables

Ice cream

½ to 1 cup low-fat yogurt (flavored or plain)

To help control binge, emotional and nighttime eating:

- Get into the habit of eating three healthy meals a day — breakfast, lunch and dinner — so you never get too hungry.
- Don't keep binge foods at home. If you're a binge eater, you know which foods you usually reach for. Common binge foods are cookies, candy, ice cream or chips.

Make a list of other things you'll do instead of overeating. Here are some suggestions:

- Take a walk or enjoy another physical activity.
- Talk to a friend who can help you get your feelings under control.
- Do something you enjoy, such as reading, playing or listening to music, playing with pets or children, doing arts and crafts or taking a relaxing bath.
- Do some physical work, such as gardening or housecleaning.

Body Mass Index in Adults

The benefits of maintaining a healthy weight go far beyond improved energy and smaller clothing sizes. By losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight, you are also likely to enjoy these quality-of-life factors:

- Fewer joint and muscle pains
- More energy and greater ability to join in activities they enjoy
- Better control of bodily fluids and blood pressure
- Reduced burden on your heart and circulatory system
- Better sleep patterns
- Reductions in blood triglycerides, blood glucose and your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes
- Reduced risk for heart disease and certain cancers

What is BMI?

BMI is an indicator of the amount of body fat for most people. It is used as a screening tool to identify whether an adult is at a healthy weight.

- BMI is a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height. A BMI between 18.5 and 25 kg/m² indicates a normal weight. A BMI of less than 18.5 kg/m² is considered underweight. A BMI between 25 kg/m² and 29.9 kg/m² is considered overweight. A BMI of 30 kg/m² or higher is considered obese.
- To check your BMI, type your height and weight into the BMI calculator for adults from the National Institute of Health. A separate BMI percentile calculator should be used for children and teens that takes a child's age and sex into consideration.
- To calculate your BMI manually, multiply your weight in pounds by 703, divide by your height in inches, then divide again by your height in inches.

- Waist circumference is the distance around your natural waist (at the iliac crest, or hip bone). If your BMI is between 25-35 kg/m², your goal for waist circumference is less than 40 inches if you're an adult man and less than 35 inches if you're a non-pregnant woman.
- Some well-trained people with dense muscle mass may have a high BMI score but very little body fat. For them, the waist circumference, the skinfold thickness or more direct methods of measuring body fat may be more useful measurements than BMI.

Excess weight increases the heart's work. It also raises blood pressure and blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels and lowers HDL (good) cholesterol levels. It can make diabetes more likely to develop, too.

Lifestyle changes that help you maintain a 3% to 5% weight loss are likely to result in clinically meaningful improvements in blood glucose and triglycerides and lower your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Greater weight loss (5% to 10%) can even help reduce blood pressure and improve blood cholesterol.

Your body is made up of water, fat, protein, carbohydrates and various vitamins and minerals. If you have too much fat — especially if a lot of it is at your waist — you're at higher risk for health problems such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. That increases your risk for heart diseases and stroke.

To determine your risk, find your height in feet and inches in the first column of the following table. The ranges of weight that correspond to minimal risk, moderate risk (overweight) and high risk (obese) are shown in the three columns for each height.

Obesity is a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. If you're overweight or obese, you can reduce your risk for heart disease by losing weight and keeping it off.

Height	Minimal risk (BMI under 25)	Moderate risk (BMI 25–29.9) Overweight	High risk (BMI 30 and above) Obese
4'10"	118 lbs. or less	119–142 lbs.	143 lbs. or more
4'11"	123 or less	124–147	148 or more
5'0	127 or less	128–152	153 or more
5'1"	131 or less	132–157	158 or more
5'2'	135 or less	136–163	164 or more
5'3"	140 or less	141–168	169 or more
5'4"	144 or less	145–173	174 or more
5'5"	149 or less	150–179	180 or more
5'6"	154 or less	155–185	186 or more
5'7"	158 or less	159–190	191 or more
5'8"	163 or less	164–196	197 or more
5'9"	168 or less	169–202	203 or more
5'10"	173 or less	174–208	209 or more
5'11"	178 or less	179–214	215 or more
6'0"	183 or less	184–220	221 or more
6'1"	188 or less	189–226	227 or more
6'2"	193 or less	194–232	233 or more
6'3"	199 or less	200–239	240 or more
6'4"	204 or less	205–245	246 or more

(Adapted from Obesity Education Initiative: Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, Obesity Research 1998, 6 Suppl 2:51S-209S)

Cooking For Weight Loss

There's usually no single cause for being overweight or obese, and there's no single solution either. But there are some simple steps you can take that will gradually shed pounds in a healthy way. (Hint: To weigh less, cook more!)

Home cooking puts you in control of what goes into your food and your body.

Here are some guidelines to get you into the kitchen and cooking healthy!

Put vegetables at the top of your shopping list, and plan your meals around them instead of around meat. Formula: more veggies, less meat. Beans are a vegetable, so have tacos with beans instead of hamburger, and add plenty of freshly chopped salsa, tomatoes and lettuce. The same goes for your lunch. Make sandwiches with less meat, and pile on the veggies. Go beyond lettuce and tomato! Add cucumbers, sprouts, spinach and sweet bell pepper strips. Hold the mayo or use the low-fat or fat-free kind.

Skip the sugary stuff. Sugar has calories, but no other nutritional value. Some sugar occurs naturally in fruits, vegetables, milk and grains. One culprit in undermining weight loss is often “added sugar” — the kind added to food and drinks during processing, as well as the obvious sugar bowl on the table. If you're cooking at home, you probably won't be adding sugar to your minestrone soup, but manufacturers might. Also, rethink your drink to get rid of added sugar.

Eat it all... for wheat that is. Choose whole-grain breads, crackers and cereals which contain all the parts of the grain. Refined grains are stripped of their healthy outer coat (bran), which lowers some of the nutrients in the grain. Eating whole food also fills you up, not out — a real boon for your weight loss efforts. Brown rice is a whole grain; white rice is not. Similarly, removing the skin from fruits and vegetables decreases their fiber content. It's better to eat a whole apple than to drink apple juice.

Fiber Up, Slim Down



Losing weight can be a frustrating experience if you feel hungry all the time. Did you know you can curb your appetite — and your frustration with weight-loss efforts — by increasing the amount of fiber you eat?

High-fiber foods may help you lose weight by helping you feel full on fewer calories. A healthy diet of lower-calorie foods and regular physical activity are your best strategies to achieve a healthy weight – and maintain it.

The scoop on hunger and satisfaction

How full you feel depends on several factors:

- How often you eat
- How much you eat
- What type of food you choose
- When your brain tells your body that it's had enough food.

Why fiber?

High-fiber foods often require more chewing and may take longer for your stomach to digest. This can help your body recognize that it is full before you start eating more. Diets rich in whole grains and fiber have been associated with better quality diets and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Finding fiber — Get the skinny

Fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains and leafy greens are some of your best bets for higher-fiber foods. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight, cholesterol and blood pressure. The American Heart Association recommends eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains.



This or that?

Look at these two lunch choices. On the left: a fried chicken sandwich on white bread with a shake. On the right: a turkey and veggie sandwich on whole-grain bread with a blended fruit smoothie. Which is healthier and better for weight loss? The turkey sandwich and the smoothie are – and they prove you don't have to sacrifice taste when you eat healthier. Better choices made consistently over time can lower your weight and improve your health.