

Optimizing Nutrition

HEALTH-PROMOTING FOODS

To optimize the nutritional quality of your diet, include the following foods on a daily or weekly basis. If you are not already eating these nutrient-rich foods regularly, start with small changes to help you increase your intake to recommended levels.



Vegetables and Fruits

- All healthy diets are rich in vegetables and fruits.
- These foods are low in calories, rich in fiber and phytonutrients (plant nutrients associated with health such as antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents).
- Aim for 5-10 servings of vegetables per day. One serving = 1 cup leafy greens or ½ cup raw or cooked vegetables.
- Choose dark green and orange vegetables more often such as broccoli, rapini, Swiss chard, spinach, dark green lettuces; carrots, sweet potatoes, yams, acorn or butternut squash.
- Aim for 2-4 servings of fruits per day. One serving = 1 “tennis ball” size fruit, ½ cup chopped fruit.
- Choose whole vegetables and fruits, not juices.



Oily Fish

- Oily fish includes salmon, trout, arctic char, sablefish (black cod), sardines, herring and mackerel.
- Oily fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, essential fats linked to heart, brain and eye health that have anti-inflammatory properties.
- Aim for at least two serving per week. One serving = 2.5 oz or 75 grams.



Legumes

- Legumes include beans, lentils, split peas, chickpeas, soybeans and tofu.
- Legumes are uniquely rich in both protein and fiber, as well as B vitamins (especially vitamin B6 and folate), and the minerals iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium.
- Aim for 4 servings per week. One serving = ¾ cup.



Nuts and Seeds

- Nuts and seeds are a good source of protein and healthy unsaturated fats, magnesium, vitamin E, B vitamins, potassium and fiber. Since they are calorie dense, portion control is important.
- Aim for a serving of nuts and seeds most days of the week. One serving = 1 ounce (1/4 cup) of nuts or seeds or 2 tbsp nut butter (200 Kcal). Consider ½ serving if restricting calories for weight loss.



Calcium-Rich Foods

- Foods rich in calcium include milk and milk products (milk, yogurt, kefir, cheese), fortified soy milk, low-oxalate greens such as rapini, Swiss chard, kale + bok choy; almonds, and tofu made with calcium sulfate.
- Calcium-fortified milk substitutes can help meet calcium needs, such as rice or almond milk.
- Calcium is important in bone health and can help regulate blood pressure.
- Choose calcium-rich foods every day. Calcium requirements range between 1000-1200 mg per day depending on age and gender.



Whole Grains

- Whole grains contain all 3 parts of the kernel – the fiber-rich outer bran layer, the inner nutrient-rich germ, and the starchy endosperm.
- Whole grains are a good source of fiber, folate, Vitamin E, magnesium and selenium.
- Choose whole grains over white refined grain products whenever possible.
- Aim for a minimum of 3 servings of whole grains per day. One serving = 1 slice of bread or ½ cup cooked grain or cooked cereal, or 30 grams dry cereal.