

Nutrition for Kids

A Dietary Approach to Lifelong Health



Play with Your Food Art ©

THE PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE



Parents know that the road to lifelong good health begins with healthful eating and plenty of exercise. Getting children started on this path is easy with a little assistance. In this guide, you will find the tools you and your family need to achieve many of your health goals, including up-to-date nutrition information, advice on changing habits, tips to get your family started, and plenty of delicious recipes.





Lifelong Habits Start Early

Food preferences and physical activity habits are established early in life.¹ Building a diet with fruits, vegetables, healthful grains, and legumes from a young age will help children prefer those foods throughout their lives. These foods are rich in antioxidants, phytochemicals, and fiber, which help protect against disease and promote a healthful body weight. When a vegetarian diet is established at an early age, it can provide nutritional advantages and promote lifelong healthful eating habits. Vegetarian children are less likely to be overweight than their nonvegetarian peers. They also consume more fruits and vegetables, fewer salty and sweet snacks, and less fat.¹ Similarly, vegetarian teens have higher intakes of cancer-fighting antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals through greater consumption of fruits, vegetables, and fiber than their nonvegetarian counterparts.²

Weighing in on Health

People who maintain a healthy weight throughout life tend to stay healthier and live longer. The lifestyle habits that help keep us slim—exercise and a healthy diet—also cut our risk of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and certain cancers.

Approximately one-third of children in the United States are overweight or obese.³ Too many children today have a reduced life expectancy and a diminished overall quality of life due to excess weight. Childhood obesity can lead to certain cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol, and abnormal glucose tolerance or diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 70 percent of obese children had at least one additional cardiovascular risk factor for heart disease, such as raised blood pressure or insulin levels, while 30 percent presented two or more additional risk factors.⁴

Many adolescent boys and girls in the United States are currently trying to lose weight (36 and 44 percent, respectively). Of those, 30 percent of



girls and 18 percent of boys practice unhealthful or even dangerous dieting methods.⁵ Calorie restriction can jeopardize normal growth and development in children and adolescents, as other essential nutrients from food will also be restricted. Further, excess weight is usually symptomatic of poor dietary patterns that calorie restriction alone will not address.

Instead, children (and adults) can simply switch to healthful foods. Eating a diet built from fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes, people tend to feel satisfied with fewer calories. For example, when a child chooses a veggie burger instead of a hamburger, he or she will save 180 calories. As an added benefit, the veggie burger has no cholesterol and 6 extra grams of fiber. A bean burrito loaded with lettuce, tomato, and salsa has 135 fewer calories than a beef and cheese burrito, while still providing all the nutrients children need. It is easy to make the switch and well worth the time.

It is never too early to adopt a healthful diet or engage in an active lifestyle. All children need fun physical activity and good nutrition regardless of age or body size.



Food	Calories	Fat (g)	Fiber (g)
Veggie Burger	218	5	7
Hamburger	373	21	2
Homemade Bean Burrito	183	3	7
Fast-Food Chili-Cheese Burrito	363	21	2

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. 2010. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 23. Nutrient Data Laboratory Home Page, <http://www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/ndl>.

Weighing in on Disease Risk

Overweight children are likely to become overweight adults, thus increasing risk for a host of health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and some cancers.

Weight Management Tips From Dr. Spock



Benjamin Spock, MD, pediatrician, medical researcher, and teacher, advised in his book *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* that weight loss programs for children should be based on changing the types of foods children eat rather than the amount of food they eat. He encouraged shifting the entire family away from oily fried foods, meats, and dairy products and toward low-fat, plant-based foods: grains, pasta, vegetables, legumes, and fruit.

When this is done, he stated, "weight loss typically occurs without anyone going hungry."⁶ This is the key to lifelong weight maintenance.

Cancer

Research shows a direct association between the amount of excess weight in childhood and cancer risk in adulthood. For every one-point increase in body mass index, there is a 9 percent increase in adult cancer risk.⁷ Therefore, the more overweight a child is, the greater his or her risk of developing cancer is later on.

Cancers of the colon, breast, and prostate are influenced by diet, exercise, and healthy weight control. Lifelong eating habits are established in childhood, and the longer the exposure to cancer-fighting foods and the avoidance of cancer-promoting foods, the greater the likelihood that cancer won't strike during adulthood. Vegetarian diets are associated with an 18 percent reduced risk for cancer, compared with nonvegetarian diets.⁸

Diabetes

Although it is almost entirely preventable, type 2 diabetes is one of the most prevalent and costly chronic diseases in the United States. Without a change in eating and exercise habits, two in five children will develop type 2 diabetes in adulthood. For Hispanic children, one in two will develop the disease.⁹

Heart Disease

In 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 21 percent of children ages 6-19 have at least one abnormal lipid level, edging closer to 30 percent when looking only among children ages 16-19: LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, or triglycerides. Among obese children, those rates were even higher, with more than 43 percent having one or more abnormalities.¹⁰ Abnormal lipids are risk factors for heart disease, which is the No. 1 cause of death in the United States.¹¹



Here are some ideas for making the switch:

- **Identify three or four vegetarian recipes your family already enjoys.** Examples include bean burritos, pasta with marinara sauce, vegetable stir-fries, and vegetable soup. Next, think of three or four more frequently prepared meals that can be easily adapted. For example, chili can be made vegetarian with beans, and other favorites, such as sloppy joes and tacos, can be made with lentils or soy products.
- **Experiment and broaden food options.** Try new foods, recipes, and places to eat to keep it interesting and enjoyable. Sometimes, when people change their food intake because of concerns about health, body size, or personal beliefs, they focus too narrowly on just a small number of foods. Exploring the broad range of healthful foods now available makes a menu change fun, nutritious, and sustainable.
- **Choose low-fat, healthful options whenever possible.** Choosing low-fat recipes and eating a variety of colors are good ways to ensure that your child's diet is a healthful one. For example, oven-roasted potatoes should be chosen over french fries, pasta with marinara sauce is a better option than spaghetti with meatballs, and fruit sorbet is just as refreshing as, but much more healthful than, ice cream. The introduction of new foods adjusts the taste buds and develops an appreciation for good, wholesome food.
- **Avoid foods and beverages with added sugar, fat, and salt,** such as candy, soda, fruit punch, cookies, and fried snack foods. Fatty condiments like creamy salad dressings, mayonnaise, butter, and margarine are best left off the plate. Instead of building meals around fatty meats and cheeses, meals should be created with whole grains, legumes (such as beans and peas), fruits, and vegetables. Instead of salt, flavor foods with herbs, spices, and lemon juice. Choose lower-sodium versions of packaged foods such as canned vegetables, frozen meals, and condiments.



The Power Plate

Plan meals using the Power Plate: whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits. Nutritious diets built from these food groups help children maintain a healthy weight and reduce their risk of certain diseases later in life. See suggested number of servings for each group in the daily meal planning table on page 10.



Whole Grains

Grains are rich in fiber and other complex carbohydrates, as well as protein, B vitamins, and magnesium. Refined grains and sweets such as cookies and cakes should be kept to a minimum.

- Whole grains include breads, hot and cold cereals, pasta, cooked grains such as rice and barley, and crackers.
- One serving equals 1 slice bread; 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal; one 6-inch tortilla; 1 cup cold cereal; or 1/2 bun or bagel.

Vegetables

Vegetables are packed with beta-carotene, folate, potassium, vitamin C, fiber, and other nutrients. Dark green vegetables, such as kale and broccoli, contain calcium* and vitamin K.

- Dark green, orange, and red vegetables include collard greens, dark green leaf lettuce, carrots, sweet potatoes, red tomatoes, and red bell peppers.
- Starchy vegetables include corn, green peas, baby lima beans, white potatoes, and plantains.
- Other vegetables include beets, cabbage, celery, green beans, mushrooms, onions, and zucchini, and many more.
- One serving of vegetables equals 1/2 cup cooked or raw for most vegetables. A serving of raw leafy greens, such as spinach, romaine lettuce, and bok choy, is 1 cup.

* While calcium in most green vegetables is easily absorbed, there are three exceptions: spinach, Swiss chard, and beet greens. The calcium in these greens is trapped and can't be absorbed as readily.



Fruits

Fruits are rich in fiber, potassium, vitamin C, and folate. Be sure to include at least one serving each day of fruits that are high in vitamin C—citrus fruits, melons, and strawberries are all good choices.

- Fruit servings should be mainly whole fruits that are fresh, canned in 100 percent fruit juice, frozen, or dried.
- One serving equals 1 small apple; 1 plum; 1/2 cup sliced or chopped banana, mango, or melon; 1/2 cup 100 percent juice; 1/4 cup dried fruit; or one 4-ounce snack container of unsweetened applesauce or fruit cocktail canned in juice.

Legumes, Nuts, and Seeds

Beans, lentils, soy, nuts, and seeds are good sources of protein, iron, zinc, and B vitamins. Legumes are the richest sources of fiber. Products made from soy and other vegetable proteins can be used in place of meat in many recipes. Try tofu, veggie burgers, soy “meats,” seitan, and tempeh.

- Beans and lentils include black beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans or chickpeas, lentils, split peas, and black-eyed peas. One serving of beans and lentils is 1/2 cup cooked. One serving of hummus is 1/4 cup.
- Nuts, seeds, and soy include almonds, walnuts, peanut butter, pumpkin seeds, and sesame seeds. One serving equals 1 ounce mixed nuts, 2 tablespoons peanut or almond butter; 1/2 cup tofu; 2 ounces tempeh; 1 soy veggie burger patty; or an 8-ounce glass of unsweetened soy milk.

What about omega-3 fatty acids and fish oil?

Fish have a lot of omega-3 fat because they eat algae, and those fats come from the algae. Children can get omega-3s from plant foods, too, without the cholesterol and contaminants found in fish. Plant sources of omega-3s include ground flaxseeds, walnuts, soybeans, and tofu. Instead of eating fish or taking fish oil supplements, the healthful nutrients EPA and DHA can be found, fish-free, in algae-derived DHA-fortified foods and vegetarian supplements.



Kid Classics

Being vegetarian doesn't mean having to give up classic kid fare. While whole, unprocessed fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes should be chosen first, many of the foods children enjoy can be adapted to fit into a vegetarian menu. Here are some tips:



- **Pizza.** Try ordering pizza without the cheese and pile on the veggies. If making pizza at home, top it with vegetables, soy cheese, and veggie pepperoni.
- **Hamburgers and Hot Dogs.** Both come in a wide variety of veggie versions. You can microwave them, bake them, grill them, and top them with everything you traditionally enjoy, including soy cheese.
- **Cold Cut Sandwiches.** Even the cold cut now has a nonmeat alternative. Try a slice of veggie ham, veggie turkey, or veggie salami topped with lettuce and tomato and a thin layer of mustard or vegan mayonnaise between slices of whole-wheat bread.
- **Chicken Nuggets and Buffalo Wings.** Several companies offer these traditional favorites in veggie form (look in the frozen food section of the supermarket). Just add ketchup or barbecue sauce.
- **Ice Cream.** Nondairy alternatives are available in a variety of flavors. For a twist, add frozen fruit and a little soy milk to vanilla soy ice cream, and blend to make a smoothie. A scoop of fruit sorbet—found at many of the large ice cream chains or at the grocery store—is also a refreshing treat on a hot summer day.
- **Fast Food.** Food chains such as Subway offer vegetarian sandwiches, and Taco Bell makes a bean burrito (just ask them to hold the cheese).



Sample Menus for Children and Teens

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- Breakfast:** Oatmeal with unsweetened applesauce, soy milk*
- Lunch:** Alphabet Soup**, whole-grain crackers, carrot sticks, banana
- Dinner:** Pita Pizzas**, fresh cucumber, cherry tomatoes
- Snacks:** Peach, granola, soy milk*
- Breakfast:** Whole-grain cereal with strawberries and soy milk*
- Lunch:** Hummus sandwich on whole-wheat bread with lettuce and tomato, apple juice, orange wedges, carrot sticks
- Dinner:** Baked veggie nuggets, Simply Delicious Winter Squash**, Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges**, rice milk*, fruit salad
- Snacks:** Graham crackers, banana
- Breakfast:** Granola topped with soy yogurt*, blueberries, and almonds, calcium-fortified orange juice
- Lunch:** Curly Pasta Salad**, green salad, whole-wheat bread, apple
- Dinner:** Hearty Chili Mac**, green beans, cucumber salad
- Snacks:** Popcorn, trail mix, strawberries, almond milk*
- Breakfast:** Bagel with peanut butter and banana, calcium-fortified orange juice
- Lunch:** Veggies in a Blanket**, pretzels, apple
- Dinner:** Bean burrito with lettuce, tomato, and guacamole, rice, baked tortilla chips and salsa, peach, soy milk*
- Snacks:** Hummus and crackers, Strawberry Smoothie**

* Choose unsweetened plant milks fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12.

** See delicious recipes starting on page 18.

Daily Meal Planning for Children and Teens

Planning meals with the Power Plate is easy. Choose a variety of foods from each group, and take a daily multivitamin. Calorie needs vary from child to child. The recommendations in the table below are general, for moderately active children and teens ages 3 to 18.

Food Group	Females 3-6 Males 3-5	Females 7-18 Males 6-11	Males 12-18
WHOLE GRAINS			
<i>Mostly whole grains</i>	4 to 5 servings	5 to 6 servings	7 to 10 servings
VEGETABLES			
<i>Dark green, orange, and red</i>	1 serving	1 to 2 servings	2 to 3 servings
<i>Starchy vegetables</i>	1 serving	1 to 2 servings	2 servings
<i>Other vegetables</i>	1 serving	1 serving	2 servings
FRUITS			
	2 to 3 servings	3 to 4 servings	4 to 5 servings
LEGUMES			
<i>Beans and lentils</i>	1 serving	1 to 1 1/2 servings	1 1/2 to 2 servings
<i>Nuts, seeds, and soy</i>	1 to 1 1/2 servings	1 1/2 to 2 servings	2 to 2 1/2 servings
MULTIVITAMINS AND FORTIFIED FOODS			

See “Tips for Important Nutrients: Calcium, Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, and More” on page 15.



Keeping Kids Moving

Fitness has four dimensions: cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, and body composition. Activities that get the heart pumping, such as running, swimming, bicycling, aerobics, and playing sports or outdoor neighborhood games, improve cardiovascular fitness. Strength-training activities, such as weightlifting, push-ups, and sit-ups, as well as many daily tasks, such as digging in the garden, lifting boxes, carpentry work, and so forth, improve muscular development and bone strength. Stretching, yoga, gymnastics, dancing, and martial arts all promote flexibility.

A healthy body composition balances muscle and other lean tissue with an appropriate amount of fat tissue for a child's age and sex. Healthy body compositions are achieved through a combination of an active lifestyle and a varied menu of grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruit.

Find ways to incorporate fun physical activity into your family activities daily. Children need to be engaged in active pursuits for at least an hour each day.

Fitting In Fun Physical Activities

Encourage children to play with other children and to do active things with family members. Most communities have locally organized activity programs after school, on the weekends, and during the summer. Since gym class and team sports are not every child's cup of tea, encourage individual interests such as ice skating, ballet dancing, or skateboarding.

Speak with children about their activity patterns. Children should be active for at least 60 minutes on most days. Sedentary activities, such as TV watching and computer time, should be limited except when homework requires it. U.S. preschoolers ages 2 to 5 spend approximately 32.5 hours a week in front of the television, and grade-school students ages 6 to 11 watch for 28 hours each week.¹² Add to this the time spent using the internet, doing homework, and eating dinner—and many children spend too much time sitting still.

Encouraging children to adopt a healthful, vegetarian eating style and teaching them to enjoy being active are likely the most important lessons children can learn for their long-term health.

Healthful Snacks

Young children have high calorie and nutrient needs, but their stomachs are small. Teenagers also often have high energy needs combined with busy schedules. Keep delicious, healthful snack choices on hand both at home and in the lunchbox.

Whole Grains, Breads, Cereals

Pita chips, pretzels, whole-grain crackers, granola, whole-grain cereal, popcorn, granola bars

Vegetables

Baby carrots, celery stalks (try with peanut butter and raisins), cucumber, carrots, tomatoes with nondairy dressing, salsa (try with pita chips)

Fruits

Fortified orange juice, whole fresh fruit, dried fruit, applesauce, fruit cups, frozen grapes, or banana slices

Legumes, Nuts, Seeds, Nondairy Milks

Hummus (try on carrots or crackers), nut butters (put on bread or fruit), edamame (whole cooked soybeans), soy yogurt (sprinkle with granola), soy milk, rice milk, almond milk



Learning To Eat Well

- Limit the quantities of highly processed foods and sugary beverages (otherwise known as “empty-calorie” foods) and help children understand reasonable portion sizes. Under most circumstances, restricting the calorie intake of children is not recommended. Children continue to grow and develop into their early 20s, so they can’t afford to shortchange nutrients. However, switching out the empty-calorie foods with healthful options ensures growing kids get everything they need—except the excess calories!
- Learn to listen to natural hunger and fullness cues, rather than focusing on “cleaning plates.” Help children learn to pay attention to natural internal signals to keep from overeating. If a child does not want to finish his or her meal now, the plate can be wrapped and saved for when the child is hungry later. Promising dessert as a reward is best avoided as well, as it encourages overeating and makes less healthful foods seem special.
- Teach children the value of good nutrition. Parents, guardians, and teachers can work with children toward an understanding that food is a fuel for health and fitness rather than a comfort, friend, enemy, or boredom reliever. Reading books to children that present nutrition in a fun and interesting manner is also a good educational method.
- Engage children in the food preparation process. Gardening, picking berries, apples, or other produce at farms, grocery shopping trips, or visiting the local farmers market or fruit stand can spark an interest in healthful foods. Also invite children to participate in menu planning, as well as cooking. Even very small children can help stir cold or room temperature items, wash produce, or pour ingredients. These simple experiential lessons will often go a long way toward promoting healthful eating habits.

Tips for Reducing Sodium

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- Choose low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods.
 - Choose fresh, plain frozen, or canned “with no salt added” vegetables.
 - Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt.
 - Use herbs, spices, and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table.
 - Choose prepared foods such as tempeh, seitan, and mock meats that are lower in sodium.
 - Rinse canned foods, such as beans, to remove some sodium.

Already Overweight Children

Just as with slim children, it is always the right time to adopt a healthful diet. Keep in mind that the two main contributors to overweight are low activity level and diets based on meat, dairy products, and high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. The first step toward health is assessing a family's lifestyle by looking at eating patterns and activities to determine what changes are needed to promote fitness and achieve a healthy weight. The easiest and most effective method is for all members of the family to shift together—if possible—to a healthier lifestyle. The same healthful habits will benefit the rest of the family as well as the overweight child.

Focusing on overall health is a better choice than embarking on a low-calorie diet for achieving fitness and a healthy weight. The idea is to focus on the quality of what is being eaten, not so much on the quantity. The healthiest diet avoids animal products completely and is built from grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit. Plan menus using the Power Plate (see page 6).

Surviving the School Lunch Line

Families can also help to improve “get healthy” opportunities for children in schools. Many schools are under financial pressure to downsize health and physical education programs, so health-conscious families should support school districts in their efforts to promote wellness and physical education and to promote healthier lunches in the cafeteria. School lunch programs are required to provide nutritious, low-cost meals to students; parents and teachers can help school officials understand what options should be available for children.

Here are some suggestions for improving the healthfulness of foods eaten in schools:

- **Pack a lunch.** Bean and pasta salads, grilled tofu, burritos, and sandwiches make great lunches and are easy to pack. Last night's leftovers are also a great, simple choice. Make sure to include several healthful snacks.
- **Encourage your child to request that low-fat, vegetarian entrees be placed on the lunch line.** Demand for these items will encourage the food service to incorporate healthier foods into its menu cycle.



- **Parents can also volunteer their time.** Get involved with the PTA or directly with the food service. Work with them to help incorporate healthier foods. Some parents have even donated recipes or planned healthful snack breaks in the classroom.

See *HealthySchoolLunches.org* for more information.

Tips for Important Nutrients

Calcium, Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, and More

Fortified foods and supplements are part of every American's diet, whether they realize it or not. Many products have extra vitamins and minerals added; examples include certain grains, certain dairy products, and even most table salt. Choosing fortified plant-based foods without excess fat, sweeteners, and salt is a simple way to help consume enough micronutrients without the excess calories and sodium.

Children and teens should consume 100 percent of the vitamins and minerals recommended by the National Academy of Medicine, and it's easy to get almost all of them through a healthful plant-based diet. However, certain vitamins and minerals—mainly calcium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D—can be most easily and most reliably obtained from fortified foods and supplements. Check for these important nutrients on the nutrition label of products such as soy milk, rice milk, tofu, and faux meats.

When choosing fortified foods, look on the nutrition facts label and choose products containing 20 percent or more of the daily value (DV) per serving of calcium, vitamin B12, or vitamin D. Look for products with the lowest amount of saturated fat, sweeteners, and sodium. Aim for 100 percent of the DV for calcium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D each day, which is easy to consume with fortified foods, a multivitamin, and a healthful diet. With the wide availability of fortified foods, it's never been easier to ensure that children and teens get all the nutrients necessary to grow and develop healthfully.

Staying Clear of the “Food Fight”

Children learn very early that what they eat is important to their parents, and they often use this knowledge to their advantage. Parents may sit for hours at the dinner table with their children until they finish their last asparagus spear. Food can be used as a reward, a way to exert control, or a way to rebel. Rewarding kids for good grades or good behavior with sweets can set up internal conflicts about food. This is especially true if the rewards are in opposition to current goals for health or body image. If not dealt with early, these “food fights” may extend into adult life as well.

Finding a way to sidestep the “food fight” is a priority. If a child is having trouble sticking to healthful foods, the following strategies may be helpful:

- **Stock the kitchen with healthful foods.** Having plenty of fruits, vegetables, grains, and beans on hand and keeping unhealthy foods out of the house are simple ways to eliminate conflict over which type of food to prepare or eat.
- **Focus on food as a fuel for health.** Choosing a simple, health-giving way of eating like the one suggested in these pages and explaining to children why it is important to eat this way will help them to appreciate and choose healthful foods.
- **Reduce the emphasis on food in daily life.** When people solve problems by eating or congratulate themselves with food, the importance of food has gotten out of control. Finding other solutions to problems, such as talking about them, writing about them in a journal, or taking a walk or a bike ride to figure out possible steps to take, are much healthier and more productive. Families should become accustomed to using nonfood treats as rewards, such as a warm conversation, reading, going to a movie or the park, making something, calling Grandma or a friend, or engaging in physical activities.
- **Set clear divisions of responsibility.** If a “food fight” develops, parents should define responsibilities around foods. The parent is responsible for providing appropriate food choices. The child is responsible for choosing what to eat among the choices offered.
- **Allow for healthful treats.** Fresh-fruit smoothies, a colorful cup of berries in season, or a vegetable dish prepared a favorite way can all be special treats and prevent a family from feeling deprived.

Sticking With It

The ease with which kids transition into and stick with this healthful dietary pattern can be positively influenced by a variety of factors. Family support—providing healthful foods, setting a good example, and giving nutrition education—is key. If your children have convictions about the welfare of animals or reducing the impact on the environment and/or have a clear understanding of the health value of good eating habits, they will be more likely to make the switch easily and be able to maintain this diet, not only while away from home, but throughout their lives.

For more information, please visit our websites:

Our main site for general information about
healthful eating and our campaigns:

PCRM.org

The Physicians Committee's Healthy School
Lunch Campaign site:

HealthySchoolLunches.org



Recipes

Please visit PCRM.org/Recipes for additional healthful options.

Curly Pasta Salad

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Make early to allow flavors to blend.

1 12-ounce package dry rainbow rotini pasta

1 16-ounce package frozen chopped broccoli and cauliflower, thawed completely

1 cup sliced mushrooms

4 green onions, chopped

1 2-ounce jar chopped pimentos

1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half

1 cup fat-free salad dressing

2 tablespoons soy sauce

freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 dash Tabasco sauce (optional)

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and rinse under cool water.

Place pasta in a large bowl. Add broccoli, cauliflower, mushrooms, green onions, pimentos, and tomatoes.

In a small bowl, mix fat-free dressing and soy sauce. Pour over salad and toss to mix well. Season with black pepper and Tabasco sauce, if using. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving.

Per serving (1/6 of recipe): 304 calories; 63 g carbohydrate; 10 g protein; 1 g fat; 0.2 g saturated fat; 7 g fiber; 40 mg calcium; 735 mg sodium; 3 mg iron; 38 mg vitamin C

Recipe by Mary McDougall of the McDougall Program, DrMcDougall.com

Veggies in a Blanket

Makes 40 pieces

8 flour tortillas

1/2 cup hummus

4 grated carrots

8 lettuce leaves (or a couple handfuls of baby spinach leaves), or 1 container sprouts

Warm tortillas in a dry pan, if desired. Spread hummus on the tortillas. Add carrots and lettuce or spinach. Roll up each tortilla, evenly place 5 toothpicks on each wrap, and slice into 5 individual rolls per tortilla.

Variation: Add thin sticks of cucumber or sweet red pepper before rolling.

Per serving (4 pieces): 102 calories; 19 g carbohydrate; 4 g protein; 2 g fat; 0.3 g saturated fat; 4 g fiber; 27 mg calcium; 203 mg sodium; 1 mg iron; 2 mg vitamin C



Alphabet Soup

Makes 8 1-cup servings

Little pasta in alphabet shapes makes this soup fun as well as nourishing.

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups tomato juice
- 1 small potato, scrubbed and cut into chunks
- 1 carrot, cut into chunks
- 1 stalk celery, sliced, including top
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasonings
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup alphabet pasta or small pasta shells
- 1 cup finely chopped spinach, kale, or collard greens
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, undrained

Heat oil in a large pot and add onion and garlic. Cook over medium-high heat until onion is soft, about 5 minutes.

Add tomato juice, potato, carrot, celery, Italian seasonings, and black pepper. Cover and simmer until tender, about 20 minutes.

Add pasta, chopped greens, and kidney beans and their liquid. Simmer until greens and pasta are tender, about 15 minutes. Extra tomato juice or water may be added if a thinner soup is desired.

Per 1-cup serving: 136 calories; 26 g carbohydrate; 6 g protein; 2 g fat; 0.3 g saturated fat; 4 g fiber; 426 mg calcium; 426 mg sodium; 2 mg iron; 27 mg vitamin C



Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges

Makes 4 servings

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, cut into wedges
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- vegetable oil spray

Preheat oven to 450 F.

Combine sweet potatoes, cinnamon, salt, cumin, black pepper, and garlic powder in a plastic bag. Seal and shake. Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet (do not overlap) coated with vegetable oil spray. Bake for 20 minutes or until very tender, flipping potatoes once during cooking.

Per serving (1/4 of recipe): 53 calories; 12 g carbohydrate; 1 g protein; 0.1 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 2 g fiber; 24 mg calcium; 106 mg sodium; 0.5 mg iron; 11 mg vitamin C





Simply Delicious Winter Squash

Makes 4 servings

This is a great recipe for preparing butternut squash, because it's quick, easy, and absolutely delicious!

- 1 small butternut squash
- 1/2–1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons reduced-sodium soy sauce

Peel the squash, then cut it in half and remove the seeds. Cut the squash into 1-inch cubes (you should have about 4 cups). Place into a pot with water, maple syrup, and soy sauce. Cover and simmer over medium heat until the squash is fork tender, about 15 minutes.

Per serving (1/4 of recipe): 63 calories; 16 g carbohydrate; 1 g protein; 0.1 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 2 g fiber; 54 mg calcium; 94 mg sodium; 0.8 mg iron; 18 mg vitamin C

Pita Pizzas

Makes 6 pizzas

Whole-wheat pita bread makes a perfect crust for a child-size pizza, and children enjoy assembling them once the vegetables have been chopped. In addition to the toppings listed, you could also add fat-free vegetarian pepperoni slices.

- 1 15-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 6-ounce can tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon garlic granules or powder
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 6 pieces whole-wheat pita bread
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms

Preheat oven to 375 F.

Combine tomato sauce, tomato paste, garlic, basil, oregano, and thyme.

Turn a piece of pita bread upside down and spread with 2 to 3 tablespoons of sauce. Top with chopped vegetables. Repeat with remaining pita breads. Arrange on a baking sheet and bake until edges are lightly browned, about 10 minutes.

Note: You will only use about half the sauce. Refrigerate or freeze the remainder for use at another time.

Per pizza: 153 calories; 32 g carbohydrate; 6 g protein; 1 g fat; 0.2 g saturated fat; 5 g fiber; 24 mg calcium; 538 mg sodium; 3 mg iron; 40 mg vitamin C

Hearty Chili Mac

Makes ten 1-cup servings

Children of all ages will enjoy this tasty combination of chili and pasta.

- 8 ounces dry macaroni noodles
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 small red or green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 8-ounce package vegetarian ground beef substitute or 4 vegetarian burgers, thawed (if necessary) and chopped
- 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, undrained
- 1 15-ounce can corn, undrained
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain, rinse, and set aside.

Heat water in a large pot. Add onion and garlic. Cook until onion is soft, about 5 minutes.

Add bell pepper and vegetarian ground beef substitute or chopped vegetarian burgers. Mix in tomatoes, beans and their liquid, corn and its liquid, chili powder, and cumin. Cover and simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes.

Add cooked pasta and check seasonings. Add more chili powder if a spicier dish is desired.

Per serving (1 cup): 211 calories; 38 g carbohydrate; 12 g protein; 2 g fat; 0.3 g saturated fat; 5 g fiber; 62 mg calcium; 348 mg sodium; 4 mg iron; 24 mg vitamin C

Strawberry Smoothie

Makes about two 1-cup servings

Try this cold, thick smoothie with whole-grain cereal or muffins for a delicious breakfast. You can buy frozen strawberries or freeze your own in an airtight container. To freeze bananas, peel them and break into inch-long pieces. Pack loosely in an airtight container and freeze. Bananas will keep in the freezer for about two months, strawberries for six months.

- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 cup frozen banana chunks
- 1/2–1 cup unsweetened apple juice

Place all ingredients in a blender and process on high speed until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping blender occasionally to move unblended fruit to the center with a spatula. Serve immediately.

Per serving (1 cup): 135 calories; 34 g carbohydrate; 1 g protein; 0.4 g fat; 0.1 g saturated fat; 4 g fiber; 26 mg calcium; 5 mg sodium; 1 mg iron; 53 mg vitamin C



Foods That May Be New to You

The majority of ingredients in the recipes are common and widely available in grocery stores. A few that may be unfamiliar are described below. Additional vegetarian ingredients you may come across as you adopt this new eating pattern are also described below.

Almond milk—is a dairy-free “nut milk” that is very low in fat and therefore low in calories, especially when unsweetened. When fortified, it offers as much if not more calcium than cow’s milk.

Brown rice—is an excellent source of protective soluble fiber as well as protein, vitamins, and minerals that are lost in the milling of white rice. Available in long-grain and short-grain varieties. Long grain, which is light and fluffy, includes basmati, jasmine, and other superbly flavorful varieties. Short grain is more substantial and perfect for hearty dishes. Nutritionally, there is very little difference between the two.

Glossary

Tahini

Chickpeas

TOFU

Tempeh

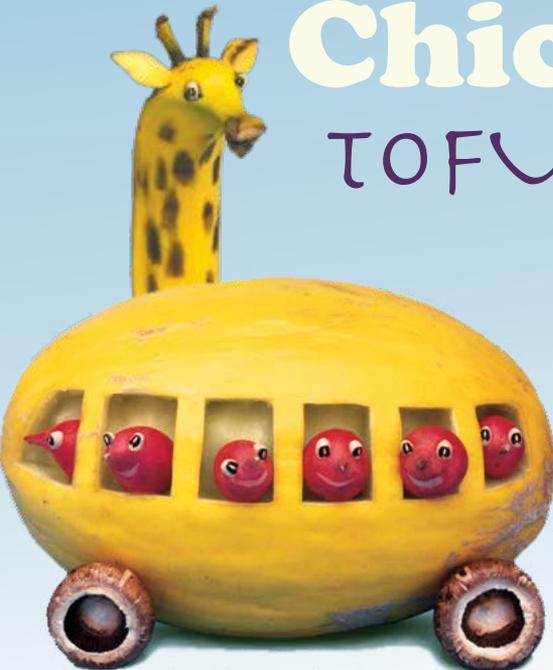
BROWN
RICE

Bulgur

Seitan

COUSCOUS

Quinoa



Buckwheat—is a fruit seed and is commonly used to make a gluten-free flour. It is sometimes referred to as kasha.

Bulgur—is a grain made from wheatberries that have been cracked and toasted. It cooks quickly and has a delicious, nutty flavor. Bulgur is high in fiber and protein, and contains easily absorbed minerals and vitamins, such as iron, calcium, and folate. Bulgur is also sold as “Ala.”

Carob powder—is the roasted powder of the carob bean, which can be used in place of chocolate in many recipes. One appeal of carob over chocolate is that carob is caffeine free.

Chia seeds—are black, round, and mild in taste and popular for their concentrated source of omega-3 fats. They can be toppings on foods like cereal and salad or blended and baked into recipes.

Chickpeas—are also called garbanzo beans. These versatile, light-brown beans have a nutty flavor and are a great source of protein, fiber, folate, vitamin B6, vitamin C, and zinc. They are available dried or canned and are commonly used to make the popular spread hummus.

Couscous—looks like a grain, but is actually a very small pasta. Some natural food stores and supermarkets sell a whole-wheat version. Look for it in the grain section.

Flaxseeds—are brown, oval seeds popular as a good source of omega-3 fats and, to provide maximum nutritional benefits, are best when ground.

Nutritional yeast—not to be confused with either brewer’s or baker’s yeast, is cultivated specifically for use as a nutritional supplement. Nutritional yeast is an excellent source of protein and vitamins, especially the B-complex vitamins, and has a nutty, creamy, cheesy flavor. Certain nutritional yeasts, such as Red Star Vegetarian Support Formula Nutritional Yeast and Bragg Nutritional Yeast Seasoning, are good sources of vitamin B12.

Miso (“mee-so”)—is a salty fermented soybean paste used to flavor soup, sauces, and gravies. It is available in light, medium, and dark varieties. The lighter-colored versions have the mildest flavor, while the dark are more robust. Miso is rich in B vitamins and protein.



Quinoa (“keen-wah”)—is a grain-like food high in protein that cooks quickly and may be served as a side dish, pilaf, or salad.

Rice milk—is one of several “grain milks” used in place of cow’s milk. Because rice milk does not contain lactose, it is also suitable for those who are lactose intolerant.

Seasoned rice vinegar—is a mild vinegar made from rice and seasoned with sugar and salt. It is great for salad dressings and on cooked vegetables.

Seitan (“say-tan”)—also called “wheat meat,” is a high-protein, low-fat food with a meaty texture and flavor.

Soy milk—is nondairy milk made from soybeans that can be used in recipes or as a beverage. Soy milk is sold fresh in convenient, shelf-stable packaging. Calcium-fortified varieties are widely available.

Tahini (“ta-hee-nee”)—is sesame seed butter. It comes in raw and toasted forms (either will work in the recipes in this book).

Tempeh (“tem-pay”)—is a hearty, fermented soy product that can be used in place of meat in many recipes.

Textured (or texturized) vegetable protein (TVP)—is a high-protein meat substitute made from soy flour. It also contains a fair amount of fiber and is low in fat and carbohydrates. The flavor is neutral, so it absorbs the flavors with which it is cooked.

Tofu—is a product made from soybeans that can be used in dishes such as stir-fries and also popularly used in its silken form to make sauces, creams, and dips. It is sometimes called bean curd.



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Nutrition for Kids is not intended as individual medical advice. Always discuss any diet change with your personal physician or your child's pediatrician. In some cases, diet changes may alter medication needs. Persons who follow a vegetarian diet should be sure to include a source of vitamin B12 in their daily routine, such as fortified cereals, fortified soy milk, or any common multiple vitamin.

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