

## Nutrition Tip of the Day

Source: American Dietetic Association

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

**Nutrient Density:** Have you heard the term "nutrient-dense" to describe foods and beverages? It means the items contain substantial amounts of vitamins and minerals, with relatively few calories. Foods that are low in nutrient density are those that supply calories but have very little health benefits. Fruits, vegetables, low-fat milk and lean meat and poultry usually fall into the nutrient-dense category. Candy and soft drinks, on the other hand, supply calories but have few vitamins and minerals.

**Enjoy Your Meal and Health Benefits:** When you eat slower, you get more of an opportunity to savor each bite. But did you know that eating slowly may also help with weight control? It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register that your stomach is full. So if you're eating slowly, it's more likely that you'll recognize these signals. Slow eating also allows you time to enjoy the flavor and texture of foods, as well as the company of family and friends around the table.

**Cut Out The Fat:** When shopping for meat, certain words indicate cuts that are lower in total fat and saturated fat. Look for "round" or "loin" in the name when shopping for lean beef and the words "loin" or "leg" when you're seeking lean pork or lamb. If you're not sure of the cut, ask the butcher or check the label. Along with the net weight, unit price and cost per package, the label tells you the kind and the cut. To prepare lean cuts of meat, try broiling, grilling, roasting, pan broiling, braising, stewing or stir-frying.

**Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth and Nutrient Needs As Well:** Craving a sweet snack? Reach for fruit. Not only does it satisfy your sweet tooth, but fruits are packed with nutrients, such as vitamins A and C, folate, potassium, fiber and phyto-nutrients. You don't have to eat only fresh fruit-try it frozen in a fruit pop, dried in a fruit mix you make yourself or mixed into plain non-fat yogurt for a great between meal snack.

**Get The Most From Your Vegetables:** Vegetables are a great source of vitamins and nutrients. However, water-soluble vitamins like vitamin C, riboflavin, thiamin and folate can be destroyed by exposure to air, water or heat. To keep the vitamins in your vegetables from escaping, remember to steam, microwave or stir-fry vegetables instead of boiling to reduce the amount of time they are exposed to heat and cut up vegetables just before cooking and serving time to decrease the amount of their surface that is exposed to air.

**Protein Needs of Athletes:** The average American diet contains enough protein for recreational or even competitive athletics. Six to seven daily ounces of lean meat, poultry or fish or the equivalent from eggs, beans, nuts or seeds, along with dairy foods and grain products, supply enough protein for most athletes. Weight lifters and athletes involved in endurance sports do need more protein. Athletes who are vegetarians can consume enough protein for rigorous activity by eating a variety of foods including beans, nuts, seeds and peanut butter. For any type of athlete, from recreational to professional, a registered dietitian can help develop an eating plan that is right for your conditioning needs.

**Fiber Is Good For Your Heart:** Fiber is known for its benefits for your digestive system and its role in colon cancer prevention, and fiber is good for the heart, too. Years of research suggest soluble fibers in beans, psyllium, oats, flaxseed and oat bran help lower blood cholesterol levels for some people. Additionally, a high-fiber diet might be lower in fat and may also help displace fattier foods you do eat. To reap the heart-health benefits of fiber, your diet must include soluble fiber. Research suggests it takes 3 grams a day for a cholesterol-lowering effect. Don't overdo your fiber intake. Eating more than 50 to 60 grams of fiber in a day can also lower the absorption of other vitamins and minerals that occurs during digestion.

**Anti-Oxidants: Your Ally in the Fight Against Disease:** The foods you eat can do much to help prevent and fight a number of diseases. Most people can benefit by eating foods rich in antioxidants, which are naturally occurring substances that help block free radicals in our bodies, prevent or repair damage to body cells and may also improve immune function and lower risk of infection or cancer. Antioxidants can be found in many foods, including fruits and vegetables, nuts, grains, some meats, poultry and fish, tea and red wine. For more information on how your eating plan can help you fight disease, consult a registered dietitian.

**Get Keen on Quinoa:** For a diet rich in whole grain and variety, try adding quinoa to your menu. Quinoa, pronounced keen-wah, is often referred to as the mother of all grains since it sustained the people of the Andes Mountains for more than 5,000 years. Quinoa is a complete protein supplying all eight of the essential amino acids and is a good source of fiber, folate, magnesium, iron, phosphorus and many phyto-chemicals. Quinoa can help with heart disease, diabetes and cancer prevention. It has a mild, nutty flavor, a fluffy texture similar to couscous and it can be used in place of rice, pasta or other grains. Serve quinoa for breakfast in place of hot cereal, as a salad or a side dish. One cup provides five grams of fiber and contains over 200 calories.

**Fuel Up to Play 60:** Fuel Up to Play 60, a joint effort of the National Football League, National Dairy Council and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is a fun, interactive and individualized program designed to motivate kids to move more and make better food choices in order to improve the health of the next generation. Besides encouraging kids to be more physically active — up to 60 minutes every day — the nutrition component of the program focuses on “Food Groups to Encourage,” like low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, which include nutrients kids need to grow, like calcium, potassium, magnesium, fiber and vitamin E. You can develop a similar plan with your own children in your home. Develop fun and interactive ways for you and your children to get 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Work together to develop family meals that include the vital nutrients your kids need to grow. And teach them how to make healthy choices when away from the home. To ensure that your children have a nutritionally balanced and physically active lifestyle,

**Healthy and Tasty Whole Wheat Pasta:** Many varieties of whole-grain and whole-wheat pastas are showing up on menus and grocery store shelves. Venture into uncharted territory with these tasty alternatives. They taste great and offer more health benefits than traditional pastas. Whole-grain pastas like spaghetti, lasagna macaroni and fettuccine, like traditional pasta, are high in starches or complex carbohydrates. However, the fiber content of whole-grain pastas is almost three times higher — ½ cup of whole-wheat pasta has about 3 grams of fiber, compared to about one gram in traditional pasta. For a delicious and nutritious meal, combine whole-grain pasta with a zesty tomato sauce that includes other vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and zucchini and top with low-fat or fat-free mozzarella.

**Functional Beverages:** A growing number of “functional beverages” including juice, tea, soft drinks and flavored water enhanced with herbs, phyto-nutrients and other ingredients are being marketed with promises to improve your memory, put you in a better mood, relieve stress, give you energy and fight fat. Do these drinks deliver on all these claims? In reality, most functional beverages have not been found to offer special health benefits for most healthy people. Claims aren't proven; the amount of the added ingredient is neither standardized nor identified on the label; and their safety isn't known. Functional drinks also won't compensate for unhealthy eating or living. Your best approach to health and feeling energetic remains healthy eating, regular physical activity and getting enough sleep.

**Overcome Excuses for Skipping Breakfast:** For you and your children, every excuse or barrier to eating a nutritious breakfast has a solution. Don't let these excuses stand in your way of starting your day with a good breakfast. Think of breakfast as your body's morning refueling stop to get your day going the right way. Consider starting your day with a cup of 100% fruit juice or a piece of whole-wheat toast. Later when you are hungry, eat a mid-morning snack — a hard-boiled egg, low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt, low-fat string cheese or a whole-wheat bagel. Also don't use the excuse of “I don't like breakfast foods.” Breakfast can be any food you like. A slice of whole grain veggie pizza, bowl of homemade soup or a lean-meat sandwich all make a fine breakfast. Our mothers really are right...Breakfast is the most important meal of the day!

**Navigating the Cereal Aisle:** There is perhaps no greater variety of items at your supermarket than in the cereal aisle. Which to choose? Read the Nutrition Facts labels to compare nutrient content of products and pick those made with whole grains. Some cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals. Check the nutrients in fortified cereals. Most cereals supply approximately 25% of the Daily Value for vitamins and minerals, and some have much more. Cereals that are good fiber sources supply at least 2.5 grams of fiber per serving; whole-grain cereals typically contain even more. Don't assume cereals labeled “natural” or “granola” are necessarily more nutritious. Some of these products can be high in fat, sugars and sodium. Adding low-fat milk or yogurt makes cereal a great source of calcium and other nutrients; that's why labels give information for both cereal only and cereal with added milk.

**The Healthy Dark Green Leafy Veggies:** Dark leafy greens carry a serious nutritious punch. They provide you with vitamins, minerals and phyto-nutrients. As a general rule, the darker green the better. For example, spinach provides more of a nutritional benefit than iceberg lettuce. There are multiple ways to get your greens in and salad is only

one of the many ways. Dark green vegetables can be grilled, sautéed in olive oil or used in omelets, soups, wraps, sandwiches and casseroles.

**Whole Grains:** Look at any healthy eating plan, and you will see whole grains as a staple ingredient. Whole grains are important sources of fiber, phyto-nutrients and key vitamins and minerals. Your goal should be to eat at least three whole-grain servings per day. Venture beyond white pasta and rice and you'll discover whole grains are easy to cook and incorporate into your favorite dishes. While most grains can be cooked on the stovetop using two parts water to one part grain, you may need slightly more water for drier grains like millet, quinoa and amaranth.

**Shake Up Your Salt Intake:** Salt and sodium consumption continue to be major topics in the discussion of health, especially heart health. Take the "shaker test" to find out how much salt you typically add to your food. Cover a plate or a bowl with foil or plastic wrap. Now salt your "food" just as you would if the dish contained a meal. Measure how much salt you added. If it was ¼ teaspoon, you added almost 600 milligrams of sodium to your meal, and ½ teaspoon adds about 300 milligrams. The proposed 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommends that the average person limit total sodium consumption to less than 1500 milligrams a day. Control your intake by watching how much you use in cooking and at the table and by monitoring sodium content on packaged foods you purchase. Consult a TAFB Registered Dietitian who can help develop a heart-healthy eating plan for you.

**To Supplement or Not to Supplement:** About 40% of Americans take vitamin supplements, but studies show many don't know how to safely or appropriately use a supplement — or even if they need supplements in the first place. The best nutrition-based strategy for promoting optimal health and reducing your risk of chronic disease is to include a wide variety of foods in your daily diet. Additional nutrients from supplements can help some people meet their nutrition needs, but only those needs specified by science-based nutrition standards like the Dietary Reference Intakes. Remember to include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and 1% or fat-free dairy in your daily diet to get the nutrients your body needs.

**Oats-A Quick Way to Boost Your Health:** Oats are a good source of soluble fiber, and are well known for their heart-healthy benefits, which includes lowering blood cholesterol. The plant substances in oats may help control blood pressure. And since oatmeal helps you feel full longer, it may also help control body weight. To reduce your cholesterol, it is recommended that you eat three grams of soluble fiber a day from *all* your foods. To meet one-third of this requirement, all you need to do is eat one serving of oat-based foods, such as 1 cup ready-to-eat oat cereal, ½ cup cooked oatmeal or 1/3 cup cooked oat bran. Want to get some more oatmeal into your meals? Consider adding oatmeal to muffins, burgers or turkey meat loaf as a binder.

**Pass the Peas, Please:** Peas are a delicious, low-calorie snack and a good source of protein. They also provide vitamins A and C and iron. Peas are available fresh, frozen, canned and dried. If selecting fresh peas, look for a shiny exterior and bright color. Here are a few of the many pea varieties and ways to enjoy them:

- Snow peas — commonly eaten raw, directly from the pod. Snow peas make a deliciously cool summer snack.
- Sugar snap peas — is a stir-fry favorite. Also try using them raw in salads for extra crunch.
- Split pea — is a winter soup wonder. Rather than making split pea soup with fatty ham or bacon, add roasted tomatoes for an alternative smoky flavor.
- Black-eyed pea — is a staple in southern dishes. Use this pea in your next dish for added iron and protein.

**Healthy Eating Abounds with Under the Sea Favorites:** Besides being a good protein source, most seafood is low in fat, especially saturated fat. Fatty fish offers potential health benefits from omega-3 fatty acids. With 50 to 100 varieties of fish commonly on the market, great taste and versatility are as close as the nearest grocery store. With so many varieties available, fish can be one of the most versatile foods you eat. Try new recipes and preparations and make this delicious fruit of the sea a part of your healthy eating plan. For safety, don't buy cooked seafood that's displayed alongside raw seafood, as bacteria from raw fish can contaminate cooked fish.

**Have A Beet-licious Dish:** Not only are beets low in calories, high in fiber and packed with natural sweetness, vitamins and minerals, they also come in many different colors and can be enjoyed from the bottom of their roots to the tops of their greens. Grocery stores and farmers' markets carry many varieties of beet, including the traditional red ruby, golden and the red and white striped Chioggia. Each has a unique flavor and they can be used interchangeably in the following recipe ideas:

- **Chilled beet soup.** Peel and boil 2 cups of beets in 2 cups of low-sodium chicken broth. Blend when the beets are tender and serve with a dollop of low-fat sour cream.
- **Roasted beets.** Cut beets into bite-sized pieces, mix with 2 Tablespoons olive oil and the juice of one lemon. Roast in a 400 degrees Fahrenheit oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender.
- **Tri-color beet salad.** Cut different varieties of beets into disks, each ¼ -inch thick. Boil until tender and chill. Arrange on top of leafy greens with your favorite low-fat dressing.
- **Beet greens.** Don't throw away the beet tops. A quick sauté of beet greens provides a delicious dish that contains vitamins A and C. Chop the greens in rough-sized pieces, sauté them in 1 Tablespoon olive oil for 10 minutes over medium heat and you'll have a delicious side dish for grilled fish or chicken.

**Eat Right With Color: All Year Long:** National Nutrition Month is coming to a close. If you have spent the month developing a healthful eating plan that is right for you, don't stop now. Eat right all year long with the tools you've learned this month. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetable, whole grains, nuts and beans to ensure your body gets the vitamins and nutrients it needs. Seek the expert advice of a TAFB Registered Dietitian for help in developing a healthy eating plan that is personalized and practical for your lifestyle. Bookmark the American Dietetic Association on your computer as your quick-reference guide for healthy eating information all year.