

Healthy Cooking for You and Your Family

Food Label and Recipe Modification



Note: Condensed version for participants.

What is healthy cooking?

Many people associate healthy cooking with giving up their favorite foods and recipes, but that simply isn't true. Cooking healthily means making sure the foods you prepare follow the Dietary Guidelines while providing the recommended servings set forth by MyPlate.

Read before you cook.

(See M1414 *Understanding Today's Food Label.*)

- The Nutrition Facts label shows the serving size and the number of servings in the package. Serving sizes are standardized, which makes it easier to compare foods. Pay attention to how many servings are in the food package.
- The calorie portion on the label can help you manage how many calories you are consuming. Remember, consuming more than one serving increases the calories you consume.
- The next section on the facts label shows you the nutrients you must watch carefully. Consuming a diet high in fat, cholesterol, or sodium may increase your risk of certain diseases, such as heart disease or hypertension. An addition to the food label is trans fat. By January 2006, all food labels must include trans fat. You should keep trans fat intake as low as possible.
- The next section of nutrients is important for improving health and reducing the risk of disease. Many Americans do not consume enough dietary fiber. By reading the Nutrition Facts label, you can learn how to increase the nutrients you need to consume in greater amounts.
- The percent daily values are based on recommendations for key nutrients for a 2,000-calorie diet. Whether or not you consume 2,000 calories, this information can still be useful. The percent daily value helps you to compare similar foods. By looking at the percent daily value, you can tell which brand or product is higher or lower in nutrients. To do this, make sure

the serving sizes are the same for both products. You can also use the percent daily value to make dietary trade offs. You do not have to give up your favorite foods to consume a healthy diet. When you choose to consume foods high in fat, balance them with foods low in fat.

Use healthy ways to spice up your recipes.

(See M1417 *Spice It Up!*)

- Spices and herbs can help flavor your food and help you to cut back on fat, sugar, and sodium. Removing a tablespoon of fat in a recipe removes about 10 grams of fat and 100 calories. Rather than using butter as flavor, try spices and herbs. You can use spices such as cinnamon, allspice, cloves, ginger, and nutmeg to give a sweet flavor rather than sugar.
- Flavors such as pepper, curry powder, cumin, dill seeds, coriander, and basil replace salt in foods.

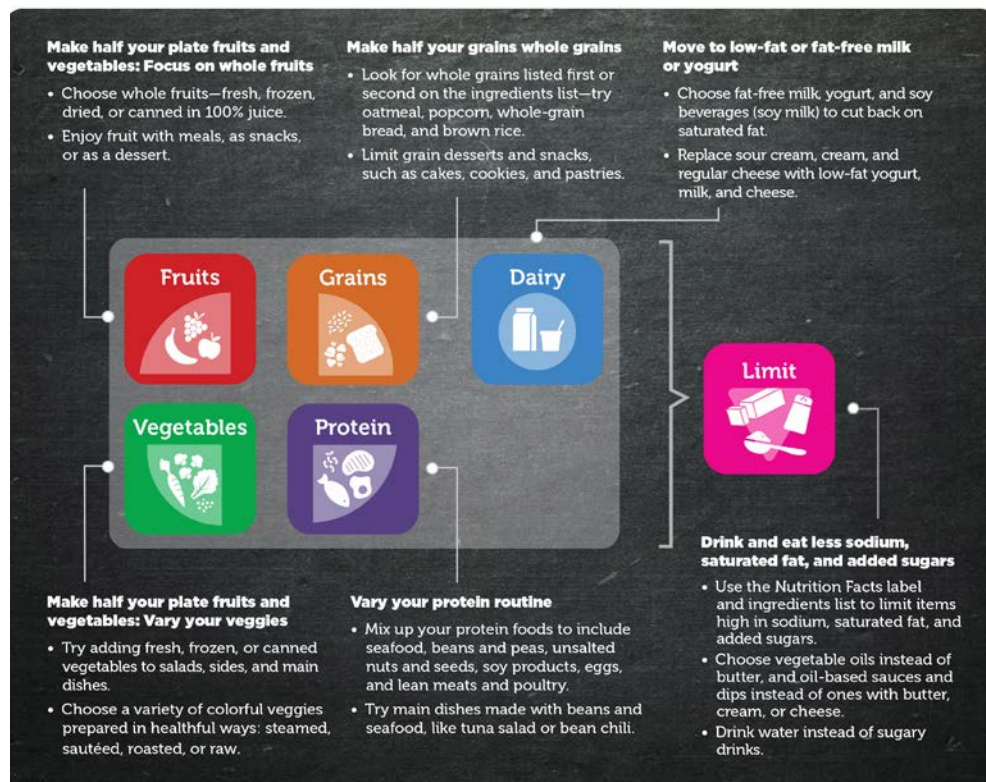
Use these recipe modification tips.

(See M1416 *Tips for Modifying Recipes.*)

- Recipes are only guidelines on how to prepare food—they are not rules. Experiment with modifying your favorite recipes to make them more nutritious.
- Reduce the amount of fat in baked products by one-fourth. Example: if your recipe calls for 1 cup of oil, use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup instead.
- Use plain lowfat yogurt in the place of sour cream. You can use yogurt in the same proportion as sour cream and you save on saturated fat calories. 1 cup of sour cream = 48 grams total fat; 1 cup lowfat yogurt = 4 grams total fat.
- Use skim or 1% milk instead of whole milk or half & half.
- To increase fiber, use 100% whole grain flour for part of your ingredients. You can substitute whole-wheat flour for up to half of all-purpose flour.
- Remember: grilling, broiling, and baking are preferred to frying. Also try steaming your vegetables to help retain their vitamins and nutrients.

Ten Tips for Healthy Snacking

1. **Save time by slicing veggies.** Slice a variety of vegetables, store in the refrigerator, and serve with dips like hummus or low-fat dressing.
2. **Mix it up.** Mix dried fruit, unsalted nuts, and popcorn in a snack-size bag for a quick trail mix.
3. **Grab a glass of milk.** A cup of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk alternative (soy milk) is an easy way to drink a healthy snack.
4. **Go for whole grains.** Whole grains are high in fiber and low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Choose things like whole-wheat bread, popcorn, and whole-oat cereals next time you are in the store.
5. **Eat lean protein.** Lean protein foods such as low-sodium deli meat, unsalted nuts, or eggs are great, healthy options!
6. **Keep an eye on the size.** Snacks are not a meal replacement, so look for ways to help your kids know how much is enough. Control serving size by using measuring cups and portioning out your snacks into snack-size bags ahead of time.
7. **Fruits are always a quick and easy option.** Fruits can be fresh, frozen, dried, or canned and are great “grab-and-go” options!
8. **Consider convenience.** Single-serve items such as low-fat or fat-free yogurt or individually wrapped string cheese are perfect for an afternoon snack.
9. **Swap out the sugar.** Don’t keep things like cookies, pastries, or sodas in the house. Instead, keep the healthier items discussed here handy!
10. **Prepare homemade goodies.** This is a fun and healthy option for you and your kids! Add dried fruits like apricots or raisins. Adjust recipes by using unsweetened applesauce or prune puree to replace half the amount of fat in the recipe.



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