

Cooking Your Way to a Healthy Diet

A healthy diet consists of a balance of breads, fruits and vegetables, meats, and dairy products. While foods such as meat and eggs provide protein, iron and other minerals that are essential in promoting good health, a diet filled with too many of these choices can lead to increased amounts of fat and cholesterol.

Read more to learn how you can continue to enjoy the foods currently in your diet while reducing fat and cholesterol.

Healthy Cooking Methods and Tips

Many of us enjoy foods that are deep fried, such as chicken and french fries. Although these foods are very tasty, they are also high in saturated fat. Use the following tips to help prepare healthier meals:

- **Trim excess fat:** Before cooking meat, trim away any excess fat from around the edges. Before cooking chicken, remove any skin, and trim away any excess fat.
- **Use low-fat flavorings:** Spice up meats with herbs and non-fat marinades. Citrus juices seasoned with herbs and a drizzle of oil make a great low-fat marinade for meat, poultry or seafood. You can also try basting meat with wine or lemon juice during cooking to add flavor.
- **Rinse away fat:** After cooking ground beef, place the beef in a colander, and rinse it with water before adding to your favorite dishes. This simple step can drastically reduce the fat content in your meals.
- **Substitute:** Try using different meats in your favorite recipes. Chicken and turkey can be used in many of your favorite recipes to give them a new flavor while reducing fat. Ground turkey can be used in place of ground beef in most recipes. Try substituting lean ham or turkey bacon for regular bacon to reduce fat and sodium without sacrificing flavor.

The following cooking methods tend to produce lower saturated fat levels while retaining flavor:

- **Baking:** Baking foods, such as chicken, in a covered dish can help to seal in flavor without adding a lot of extra fat. Try adding a little extra liquid in the form of broth or soup to add flavor.
- **Broiling:** When broiling meat, place the meat on a rack that will allow the fat to drip away. You will end up with a tasty dish with less fat.
- **Microwaving:** This is a good alternative for a quick cooking method, since it preserves nutrients through the short cooking time.
- **Poaching:** This method is particularly good with chicken or fish. For this method, make sure to immerse the meat in simmering broth which is much lower in calories than oil or butter.
- **Roasting:** Great for vegetables, skinless chicken and lean meats. When roasting meat, place a rack in the pan so the meat does not sit in its own fat drippings. Try using fat-free liquids in place of pan drippings when basting, and when making gravy. Also skim the excess fat from the drippings.
- **Steaming:** When preparing vegetables, steaming is one of the healthiest and tastiest cooking methods. Steam vegetables by placing them in a basket over a pot of boiling water.

- **Stir-frying:** Vegetables, poultry and seafood can be stir-fried in vegetable stock, wine or a small amount of oil.
- **Grilling:** This is a healthy way to prepare meat, poultry and vegetables, such as corn on the cob. Grilling locks in the flavor while allowing extra fat to drip away.

Buying Meat and Poultry

A healthy diet begins by making healthy choices at the grocery store. Use the following tips when choosing meat and poultry:

- **Look for lean meats:** Choose the leanest cuts of meat you can find. When buying beef or veal, look for cuts that contain the words "loin" or "round." You should limit the amount of veal breasts and cutlets that you purchase, as these cuts actually have a higher fat content. When buying pork, look for cuts that contain the words "loin" or "leg." When buying ground beef, look for packages that are no less than 85% lean.
- **Limit processed meats:** Reduce the amount of processed meats, such as lunchmeats and hot dogs, that you purchase and consume. These items often contain high levels of fat and sodium.
- **Choose chicken or turkey:** These meats are lower-fat alternatives to beef and pork. Skinless white meat pieces will provide you with the most health benefit. Limit the amount of goose and duck that you consume, since these meats are higher in fat.
- **Try fish:** Many varieties of fish contain lower amounts of fat and sodium than chicken and beef. Fish also contains essential vitamins and minerals, as well as omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Reduce portion sizes:** When shopping for meat, choose smaller cuts. One serving of meat is only 3 ounces, or about the size of a deck of cards. Purchase meats that are about 4 ounces to allow for shrinkage during cooking.

Additional Tips

Use the following general tips to lighten up your favorite foods and recipes:

- Try substituting salsa, a light dressing or reduced-fat sour cream for butter when preparing a baked potato.
- Use fresh lemon juice in place of butter or cheese to perk up steamed vegetables.
- Replace the high-fat mayonnaise in your salad recipes with a "light" version.
- Taste foods first before automatically reaching for the salt shaker. If more salt is needed, sprinkle the salt into the palm of your hand and use your other hand to lightly sprinkle the salt onto your food.
- Substitute yogurt for sour cream in recipes.
- Switch to low-fat or skim milk in recipes and cereal. Chances are that you will not notice the difference.
- Use egg substitutes instead of whole eggs in omelets and recipes.
- Try substituting applesauce for fats in baked goods like muffins, cakes and cookies.
- Choose whole grain instead of refined products as a quick way to up your fiber intake.

Resources

- Nutrition.gov: www.nutrition.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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