

Making Healthy Food Choices



United States
Department of
Agriculture

PREPARED BY
Human Nutrition
Information
Service

Home and
Garden Bulletin
Number 250

Dietary Guidelines For Americans

- Eat a variety of foods
- Maintain healthy weight
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products
- Use sugars only in moderation
- Use salt and sodium only in moderation
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

Think about these guidelines when making food choices for your family's good health. They are right for everyone over the age of 2.

This booklet will help you
learn more about how to
choose and prepare
healthy foods for yourself
and your family.

Contents

	Page
Add Variety to Your Meals	2
Watch Your Weight	4
Eat Less Fat and Cholesterol	6
Eat Less Salt and Sodium	9
Get the Facts About Sugar	11
Enjoy Fruits	12
Enjoy Vegetables	13
Enjoy Grain Products	14
Tips on Feeding Young Children	15
Tips on Shopping for Food	16

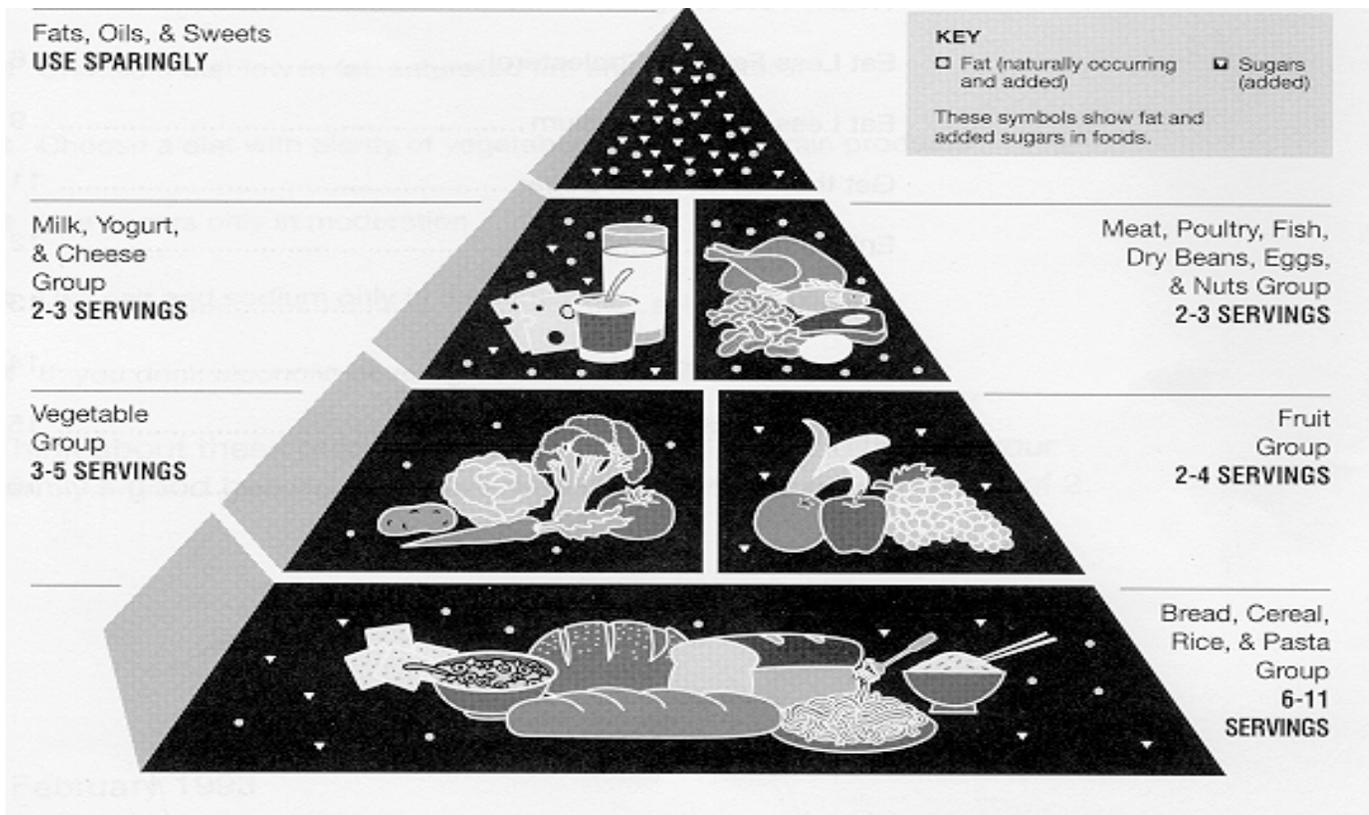
Nutrients
are found
in all foods.

Add Variety To Your Meals

No one food gives you all the nutrients you need to stay healthy. So it is best to eat a variety of different foods every day.

Use the Food Guide Pyramid to help you eat better every day ... the Dietary Guidelines way. Start with plenty of Breads, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta, Vegetables, and Fruits. Add two to three servings from the Milk group and two to three servings from the Meat group. Go easy on fats, oils, and sweets, the foods in the small tip of the Pyramid.

Food Guide Pyramid A Guide to Daily Food Choices



What counts as 1 serving?

Breads, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta

- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta
- 1 ounce of dry cereal

Fruits

- 1 medium whole fruit
- 3/4 cup of juice
- 1/2 cup of canned fruit

Vegetables

- 1/2 cup of cooked vegetable
- 1 cup of tossed salad

Milk

- 1 cup of milk
- 8 ounces of yogurt
- 1-1/2 to 2 ounces of cheese

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

- 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry, or fish (3 ounces of meat is about the same size as a deck of cards)
- 1/2 cup of cooked beans or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter or 1 egg counts the same as 1 ounce of meat (about 1/3 serving)

Fats, Oils, and Sweets

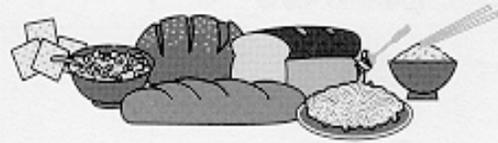
Use sparingly



How many servings do you need each day?

	Women & some older adults	Children, teen girls, active women, most men	Teen boys & active men
Bread group	6	9	11
Vegetable group	3	4	5
Fruit group	2	3	4
Milk group	*2-3	*2-3	*2-3
Meat group	2	2	3

*Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, teenagers, and young adults to age 24 need 3 servings.



The small tip of the Pyramid shows fats, oils, and sweets. These are foods such as salad dressings, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, and candies. Go easy on these foods because they have a lot of calories from fat and sugars, but few nutrients.

A calorie is a measure of the energy supplied by foods you eat and drink.

Watch Your Weight

Did you know that being overweight can increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers? If you need to lose weight, you may need to eat less, exercise more, or do both.

Some foods are higher in calories than other foods. For example, foods that have more fat and sugar have more calories. Alcohol in beer, wine, and liquor also has calories. The way a food is made can also make a big difference in the number of calories. See the foods listed below.

Lower Calorie Foods	Higher Calorie Foods
 Whole-Wheat Bread 60 calories	 Donut 245 calories
 Baked Potato 100 calories	 French Fries 320 calories
 Apple 80 calories	 Slice of Apple Pie 405 calories



One 12-fluid-ounce can of regular beer has 150 calories.

NOTE: Pregnant women should not drink alcoholic beverages because they are harmful to the baby.

DID YOU KNOW?

Foods like bread, potatoes, or spaghetti are not fattening. It is what you add to them that makes them high in calories. For example, a baked potato has a lot more calories if you add butter or margarine.

 100 calories	1 Tablespoon of butter   200 calories	2 Tablespoons of butter   300 calories
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



Eating smaller servings of food will help you lose weight.

A small serving has fewer calories than a large serving.

Be sure to exercise!

Daily exercise can help you firm up your muscles, use up extra calories, and lose weight and keep it off.

If you eat less and exercise more, you can lose weight. Here are some ways you can increase your daily exercise.

- ① Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ② Take a walk each day at lunch time or walk to work.
- ③ Join an exercise class.

(Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.)

This chart shows you how many calories you can use by doing 15 minutes of exercise. Compare that to just sitting.

Activity (15 minutes)	Calories Used
Sitting	20 — 25
Walking	60 — 75
Bicycling	90 — 115
Jogging	145 — 180
Swimming	145 — 180

(Based on healthy women and men of medium height.)



Eat Less Fat and Cholesterol

Less fat in your diet is better for your heart and your weight.

How much fat do you eat?

Think about the kinds of foods you usually eat.

Put an X in the box that tells how often you eat these foods.

	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Every day
1. Cookies, pies, or donuts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Whole milk, cheese, or ice cream.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Butter, margarine, or salad dressing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Fatty meats such as hot dogs, bologna, or bacon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Fried foods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you put an X in the boxes that say "every day," you may want to think about eating less fat in your meals.

Below is an example of two different meals. One is higher in fat, the other is lower in fat.

Higher Fat Meal

Fried chicken (thigh and drumstick) 3 teaspoons of fat

French fries, 10 strips 2 teaspoons of fat

Green beans, 1/2 cup, and butter, 1 teaspoon 1 teaspoon of fat

Whole milk, 1 cup 2 teaspoons of fat

Apple pie, 1 slice 3 teaspoons of fat

Total = 11 teaspoons of fat

Lower Fat Meal

Baked chicken (thigh and drumstick) 2 teaspoons of fat

Baked potato, 1 medium no fat
Margarine, 1 teaspoon 1 teaspoon of fat

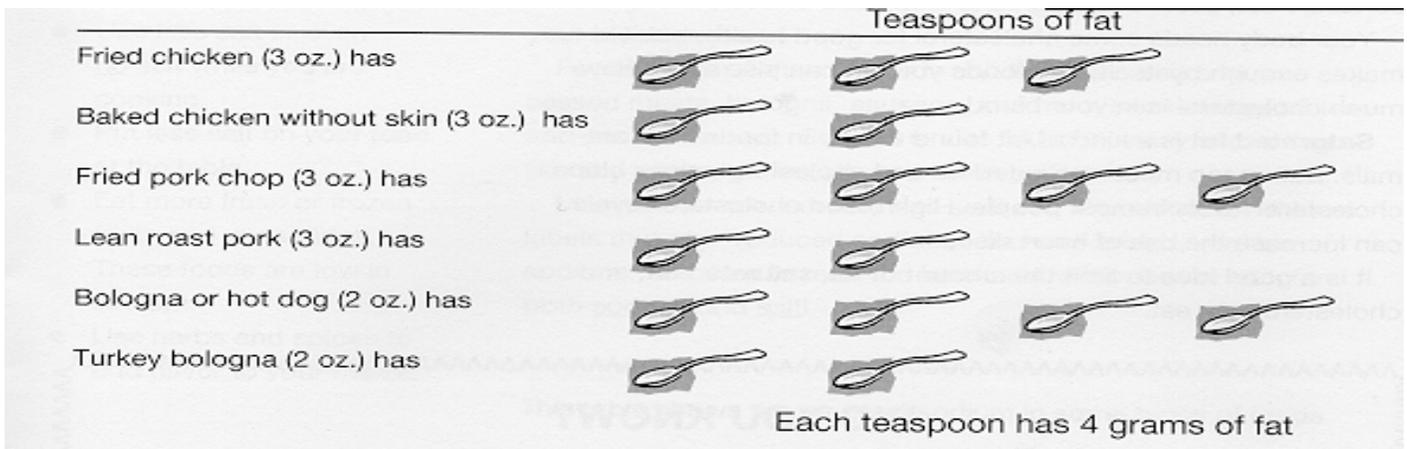
Green beans, 1/2 cup, plain no fat

2% lowfat milk, 1 cup 1 teaspoon of fat

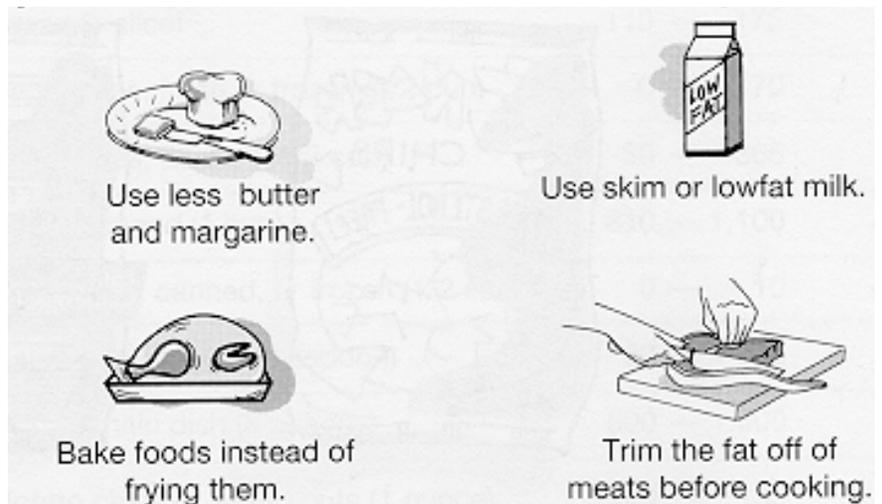
Baked apple, 1 large no fat

Total = 4 teaspoons of fat

The fat in food gives you a lot of calories and very few nutrients. And, many foods have more fat than you think. The way a food is made can also make a difference in how much fat it has. Compare these foods.



Here are some easy ways to lower the fat in your meals.



Cholesterol is a fat-like substance.

Cholesterol

You may have heard about **cholesterol**. Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that is found in foods from animal sources, such as meat, poultry, fish, egg yolks, milk, and milk products.

Cholesterol is not found in fruits, vegetables, breads and cereals, nuts, seeds, or dry beans and peas.

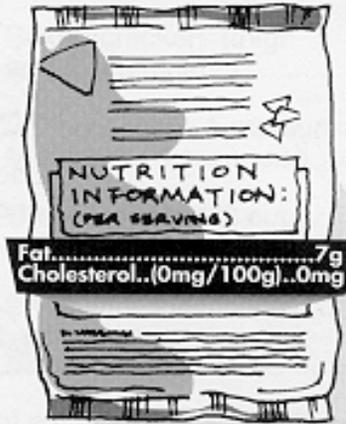
Your body needs some cholesterol for good health, but it makes enough by itself. The foods you eat can also affect how much cholesterol is in your blood.

Saturated fat is a kind of fat found mainly in foods from animals. Eating too much saturated fat and cholesterol raises blood cholesterol levels in most people. High blood cholesterol levels can increase the risk of heart disease.

It is a good idea to limit the amount of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol you eat.

DID YOU KNOW?

A product that says "cholesterol-free" can still be high in fat. Look for nutrition information on the label.



Sodium is a part of salt and other substances in foods.

Here are some easy ways to lower the sodium in your meals:

- Use less salt or even no salt while you are cooking.
- Put less salt on your food at the table.
- Eat more fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. These foods are low in sodium.
- Use herbs and spices to add flavor to your meals.



Eat Less Salt and Sodium

Sodium is found in most foods you eat and drink. Sodium is a part of salt. Sodium is also found in other substances in foods. Most of the sodium in your diet comes from salt already in foods you buy and salt you add to food in cooking or at the table.

Eating less salt and sodium may be better for your heart and your blood pressure.

Foods that are often higher in salt include cured and processed meats, bologna, sausage, and ham; canned vegetables; and some cheeses. Sodium is also found in many seasonings like soy sauce, garlic salt, and onion salt.

Many foods now contain less sodium. These foods will have labels that say "reduced sodium," "no-salt-added," or "low sodium." Be sure to read the label and remember to look for both sodium and salt!

This table shows the range of sodium in some types of foods.

Type of Food	Sodium (milligrams)
Bread (1 slice)	110 — 175
Vegetables, fresh or frozen (1/2 cup)	0 — 70
Vegetables, canned (1/2 cup)	30 — 365
Soup, canned (1 cup)	810 — 1,100
Fruit, fresh, canned, or frozen (1/2 cup)	0 — 10
Salad dressing (1 tablespoon)	80 — 220
Frozen main dish (8 ounces)	600 — 1,600
Potato chips or salted nuts (1 ounce)	120 — 135

Recipes

This main dish is low in fat and sodium.

		Italian Chicken
Makes 4 servings; 1 serving is 1 breast-half and 1/2 cup sauce		
Per serving:		
Calories	190	Cholesterol
Fat	2 grams	Sodium
		70 milligrams
		180 milligrams
Chicken breast halves, without skin		
Onion, chopped		
Green pepper, chopped		
"No-salt-added" tomato sauce		
Oregano leaves		
Basil leaves		
Garlic powder		
Salt		
4		
1/2 cup		
1/2 medium		
2, 8-ounce cans		
1/2 teaspoon		
1/4 teaspoon		
1/8 teaspoon		
1/8 teaspoon		
1. Brown chicken in hot frying pan.		
2. Mix the rest of the ingredients together and pour the mixture over chicken.		
3. Heat the mixture until it boils, then reduce the heat, cover, and cook over low heat until chicken is tender, about 45 minutes.		

This easy fruit dessert has no added sugar.

		Baked Apples
Makes 4 servings; 1 apple each		
Per serving:		
Calories	105	Cholesterol
Fat	1 gram	Sodium
		0
		0
Cooking apples		
Raisins		
Water		
Cinnamon.....		
4 medium		
4 tablespoons		
3/4 cup		
1/2 teaspoon		
1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.		
2. Remove core from apples, leaving 1/2 inch of the core at bottom of the apple. Peel top one-third of apple. Arrange apples in baking pan.		
3. Put 1 tablespoon of raisins in the center of each apple. Pour water over apples.		
4. Sprinkle cinnamon over apples.		
5. Bake 45 to 60 minutes or until tender. Spoon liquid from pan over apples one or two times during baking.		

Some kinds of sugar are white sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, and syrups.

Get The Facts About Sugar

Think about the foods you usually eat. Do they have a lot of sugar?

Many of us eat too much sugar. Foods that are high in added sugar such as candies, soft drinks, and cakes are high in calories. Eating a lot of sugary foods can contribute to tooth decay and may add unwanted weight.

Shopping Tips:

- ① Buy 100% fruit juice without added sugar.
- ② Buy cereals that are not already sweetened with sugar.
- ③ Buy fresh fruits. or fruits canned in juice. They are naturally sweet.

Food labels tell you a lot about what is inside a can or package. Sugars are listed in the ingredient label. Look for white sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, corn syrup, and other syrups.

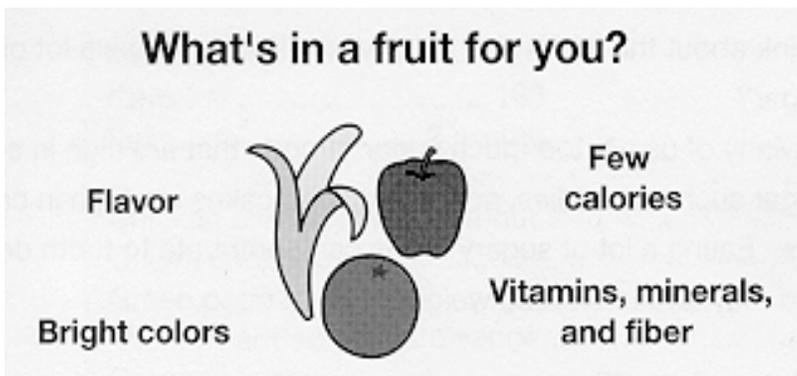


Some canned fruits are packed with added sugar.

 Peaches Water Pack	 Peaches Juice Pack	 Peaches In Light Syrup	 Peaches In Heavy Syrup
A 1/2 cup serving has: No sugar added	A 1/2 cup serving has: No sugar added	A 1/2 cup serving has: 2 teaspoons sugar added	A 1/2 cup serving has: 4 teaspoons sugar added

Vitamins are nutrients that help your body grow and stay healthy.

Enjoy Fruits



Most fruits contain vitamin C. Vitamin C keeps your gums healthy. It also helps your body heal wounds and cuts.

Fruits also contain fiber. **Fiber helps** keep your digestive tract healthy. Foods that contain fiber are usually low in calories. Only foods that come from plants contain fiber. Besides fruits, some other plant foods that provide fiber are vegetables, whole-grain breads, whole-grain cereals, dry beans, dry peas, nuts, and seeds.

Here are some ways you can use fruits in your meals:

- At breakfast use fruit in cereal, muffins, or pancakes,
- At lunch pack an apple, banana, or orange in your lunch
- At dinner add crushed pineapple to coleslaw.
- For snacks spread peanut butter on apple slices.



Choose several kinds of vegetables every day.

DID YOU KNOW?

Different kinds of vegetables have different amounts of vitamins and minerals.

Dark-green vegetables like broccoli, collards, spinach, and others have vitamins A and C, B vitamins, iron, calcium, and more.

Deep-yellow vegetables like carrots, yams, and others have vitamin A and more.

Starchy vegetables like potatoes, corn, lima beans, and others have B vitamins and more.

Other vegetables like beets, cabbage, green beans, green peppers, tomatoes, and others have vitamins A and C and more.

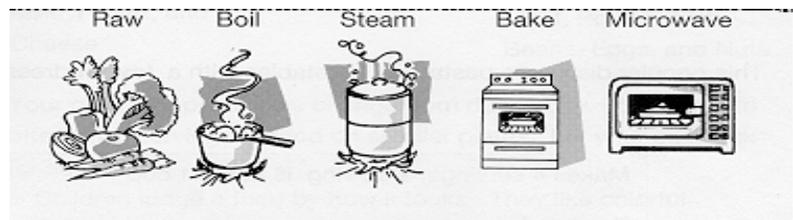
Enjoy Vegetables

Vegetables add many things to your meals:



Vegetables like carrots, broccoli, and sweetpotatoes are good sources of vitamin A. Vitamin A helps keep your skin healthy. It also protects against infection and helps your vision.

Vegetables add variety to your meals. And you can prepare them in many different ways.



Flavor Helps

Simple things added to vegetables can add to their flavor.

- Sprinkle ground cloves over baked sweetpotatoes and acorn squash.
- Mix a little oregano with cooked cabbage.
- Add cooked chopped onion to cooked peas.
- Cook carrots with crushed pineapple or pineapple juice.

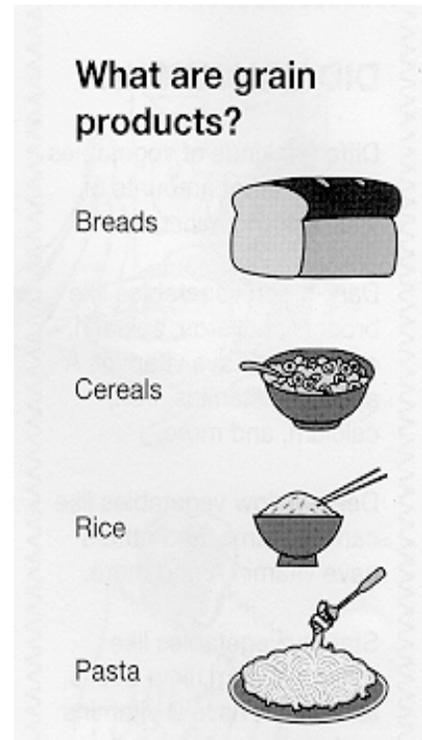
Choose some whole-grain foods every day.

Enjoy Grain Products

Grain products are good for you. They have vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They are low in fat, but are filling, and there are many kinds to choose from.

Choose some whole-grain foods every day. Whole-grain breads have more fiber than white breads. There are many kinds of whole-grain foods. For example, try whole-wheat breads, bran flake cereals, oatmeal, brown rice, corn tortillas, or popcorn.

Aren't starchy foods fattening? Many people think starchy foods such as breads, rice, and pasta are fattening. They are not. But what you add when you eat them can make them fattening! For example, butter or margarine, mayonnaise, cheese sauce, or gravy can make the starchy foods fattening by adding many extra calories.



This popular dish uses pasta and vegetables with a **lowfat** dressing.

Pasta Salad	
Makes 4 servings; 1 serving is about 1 cup	
Per serving:	
Calories	135
Fat	2 grams
Cholesterol	0
Sodium	145 milligrams
Elbow macaroni, uncooked	3/4 cup
Frozen mixed vegetables	10-ounce package
Green pepper, chopped	1/3 medium
Onion, chopped	2 tablespoons
Lowfat italian dressing	1/4 cup
1. Cook macaroni and frozen vegetables according to package directions. Leave out the salt. Drain.	
2. Add the green pepper, onion, and lowfat italian dressing. Mix all ingredients.	
3. Chill well.	

Tips on Feeding Young Children

Just like you, your child needs to eat foods from each of the food groups every day to grow and stay healthy.

Snack Ideas

Cinnamon toast
with
apple juice

Cheese slice
with
fruit cup

Cereal
with
milk

Graham crackers
with
milk

Gingersnap cookie
with
applesauce

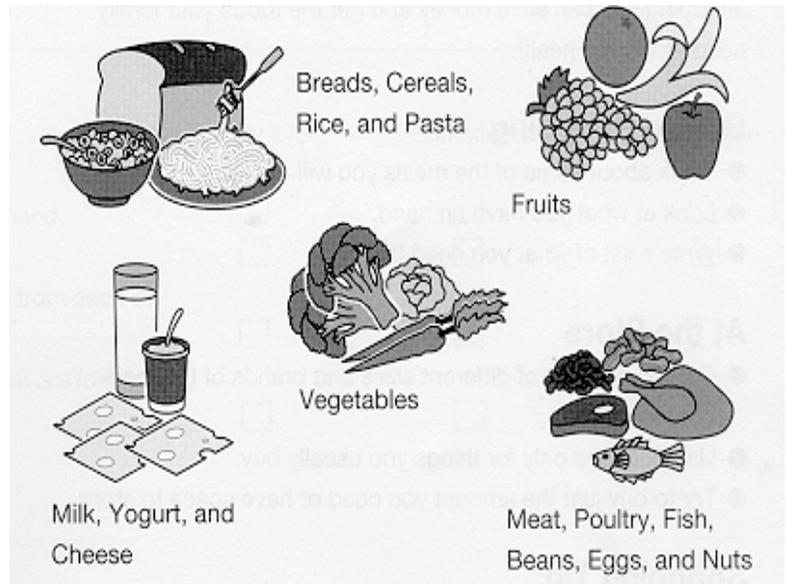
Wheat crackers
with
cottage cheese

Blueberry muffin
with
orange juice

Peanut butter toast
with
milk

Frozen banana
with
fruit juice

Peanut butter
with
apple slices



Your child's appetite may change from day to day. It is better to offer small servings of food on smaller plates. Let your child ask for seconds.

Children judge a food by how it looks. They like colorful foods. A slice of apple or orange can help make a meal look better to your child.

Snacks

Snacks are an important part of your child's day. Some children can't eat a lot at one meal. They may be hungry before it is time to eat again.

Snacks can give your child many of the nutrients he or she needs to grow and stay healthy. For snacks, give your child small amounts of the same kinds of foods you serve at meals. Or try some of the ideas in the box to the left.

Tips On Shopping for Food

Everyone wants to save money when shopping for food. The best way to save money is to plan ahead. When you plan before shopping you can save money and get the foods your family needs for good health.

Before Shopping

- Think about some of the meals you will make.
- Look at what you have on hand.
- Write a list of what you need to buy.

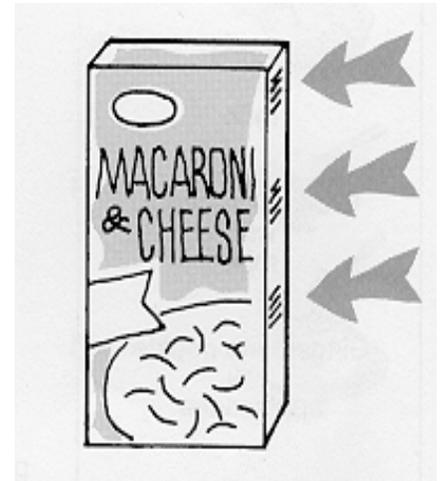
At the Store

- Compare prices of different sizes and brands of the food you're buying.
- Use coupons only for things you usually buy.
- Try to buy just the amount you need or have space to store.

Shopping Tip:

Package-mix dinners and other ready-to-eat foods are popular because they are easy to make and save you time in the kitchen. Just add a salad or fruit, a roll, and something to drink for a complete meal.

Many package-mix foods are high in fat and sodium. Be sure to read the nutrition labels. Choose the products that are lower in fat and sodium. You can lower the fat and sodium in foods you prepare from mixes. Look at the example in the picture.



- Leave out the salt
- Use half the margarine
- Use lowfat milk instead of whole milk

Following the tips in this picture will lower the sodium content by 260 milligrams and the fat content by 6 grams in each serving.



Are You a Smart Shopper?



Put an X in the box that says what you do at home before you go shopping and things you do at the store while you are shopping.

Things I Do at Home:

	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Every time
1. Look to see what I have on hand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Plan meals and make a list.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Plan to buy a variety of food from each of the food groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Think about buying foods that are lower in fat, sugar, and sodium.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Things I Do at the Store:

	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Every time
1. Read labels to see how much fat, sugar, and sodium are in foods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Buy canned fruits packed in water, juice, or light syrup.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Buy fewer foods that are high in sugar such as soft drinks, sweet desserts, and fruit-flavored punch.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you put an X in the boxes that say "every time," then you are a smart shopper.