

Foundations of A Healthy Eating Pattern



Do you ever feel confused about what to eat? Nutrition is a field that is ever changing and can be difficult to navigate. What you eat affects your cells, energy, skin, mood, and weight—choose wisely! A few general food rules can help make your food choices a little bit easier.

- Real food is almost always the best choice—meaning, try to eat plenty of fruits and veggies, whole grains, and unprocessed meats or quality sources of protein, like beans, lentils, tofu, or nuts.
- Try to limit or avoid processed foods that are high in sugar, refined grains (a few examples include crackers, cereals, or white breads), or foods that have additives and preservatives.
- Read the nutrition label, including the ingredient list to learn more about what you are putting into your body.

Chicken Chili with Sweet Potatoes

Serves: 5 **Time:** 40 minutes

Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 large onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups cubed sweet potato (1/2 inch)
1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
2 tablespoons chili powder
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 15oz can low-sodium cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
2 cups low-sodium chicken broth or homemade chicken stock
1 cup frozen corn
2 cups cubed cooked chicken (1/2 inch; about 10 ounces)
3/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 teaspoon ground pepper
Sour cream, avocado, and cilantro to garnish (optional)

Directions

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, sweet potato, and bell pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are slightly softened, 5-6 minutes. Stir in chili powder, cumin and oregano and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 1 minute.
2. Add beans and broth (or stock) and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, partially cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes.
3. Increase heat to medium-high and stir in corn; cook 1 minute. Add chicken and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes more. Remove from heat. Stir in salt and pepper. Serve topped with sour cream, avocado, and/or cilantro, if desired.
4. Enjoy!

Tips: How to create your personalized healthy eating pattern

Incorporate fruits and veggies into all meals. Make it a habit and, with each meal, check to ensure you have some produce. Making a smoothie? Throw in some spinach. Having a breakfast burrito or some scrambled eggs? Sauté some bell pepper and arugula with it. Top your plain yogurt with a cut-up banana or apple. Spinach is incredibly easy to add to sandwiches, burritos, pasta sauces, soups, wraps, and even meatballs. Other easy additions include onions, mushrooms, arugula, bell pepper, zucchini, and kale. Pick out a few staples to always have on hand. Once you create the habit of adding in fruits and veggies, it will come automatically, and you will hardly need to think about it.

Get enough good fats. Fat is essential for our bodies to function properly. Fat supports our brain health, hormones, skin, and cells; it is also necessary to absorb specific vitamins (A, D, E, and K). Plenty of fats are out there, but the key is to consume the right kind. Choose unsaturated fats as much as possible, found in nuts and seeds, avocados, olive or avocado oil, and fish, such as salmon, mackerel, herring, and sardines. Consuming these types of fats can help increase your HDL cholesterol (your “helpful” cholesterol) and lower your LDL cholesterol (or your “lousy” cholesterol). Fats to avoid as much as possible include trans fats and saturated fats. Trans fats can be found in fried and processed foods. Saturated fats are found in animal products.

Limit processed foods and read food ingredient labels. How often have you looked at an ingredient list and not recognized most of the ingredients? There are many additives in processed foods, like sugar and preservatives, and some may harm our health. It’s just as important to look at the nutrition facts as it is to look at the ingredient list. What if you avoided a food product because it had 20% of your daily recommended fat, but when you looked at the ingredient list, the source of fat was olive oil—a great source of healthy fat! When it comes to sugar, there are quite a few different names, like high fructose corn syrup. That will affect your body differently than, say, honey (a natural source of sugar). Check the ingredient list and become familiar with what you are putting in your body!

Healthy doesn’t have to mean plain. To be healthy, you don’t have to eat chicken, brown rice, and veggies each night. You can make delicious bowls with beans or meat, a grain, some veggies, avocado, and a homemade sauce. You can have a flavorful soup; pasta with veggies incorporated into a tomato sauce; or a simple Greek salad with lettuce, roasted veggies, chicken, hummus, tzatziki, and olive oil. If you’re just starting with a healthy diet, find a few spices you love, a sauce or condiment you like, and add them to the dish. Check the nutrition facts and ingredient labels to ensure they will contribute to your health!

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