

HealthSmart[®]

Wellness Advocate



SAVOR THE FLAVOR OF EATING RIGHT

March is National Nutrition Month, which encourages everyone to take time to appreciate the pleasures, great flavors, and social experiences food can add to our lives. It's easier than you think to make healthy eating a habit. Even small changes can make a big difference. Try incorporating at least six of the eight goals below into your diet:

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables: Choose red, orange, and dark-green vegetables like tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli, along with other vegetables for your meals. Add fruit to meals as part of main, or side dishes, or as dessert. The more colorful you make your plate, the more likely you are to get the vitamins, minerals, and fiber your body needs to be healthy.

Make half the grains you eat whole grains: An easy way to eat more whole grains is to switch from a refined-grain food to a whole grain food. For example, eat whole wheat bread instead of white bread. Read the ingredients list and choose products that list whole grain ingredients first. Look for things like: "whole wheat," "brown rice," "bulgur," "buckwheat," "oatmeal," "rolled oats," quinoa, or "wild rice."

Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk: Both have the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk, but fewer calories and less saturated fat. Almond milk and soy milk are excellent substitutes for milk. Give them a try!

Choose a variety of lean protein foods: Lean meat, poultry, seafood, dry beans or peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds are good choices. Focus on selecting leaner cuts of ground beef, turkey breast, or chicken breast.

Compare sodium in foods: Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose lower sodium versions of foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals. Select canned foods labeled "low sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no salt added."

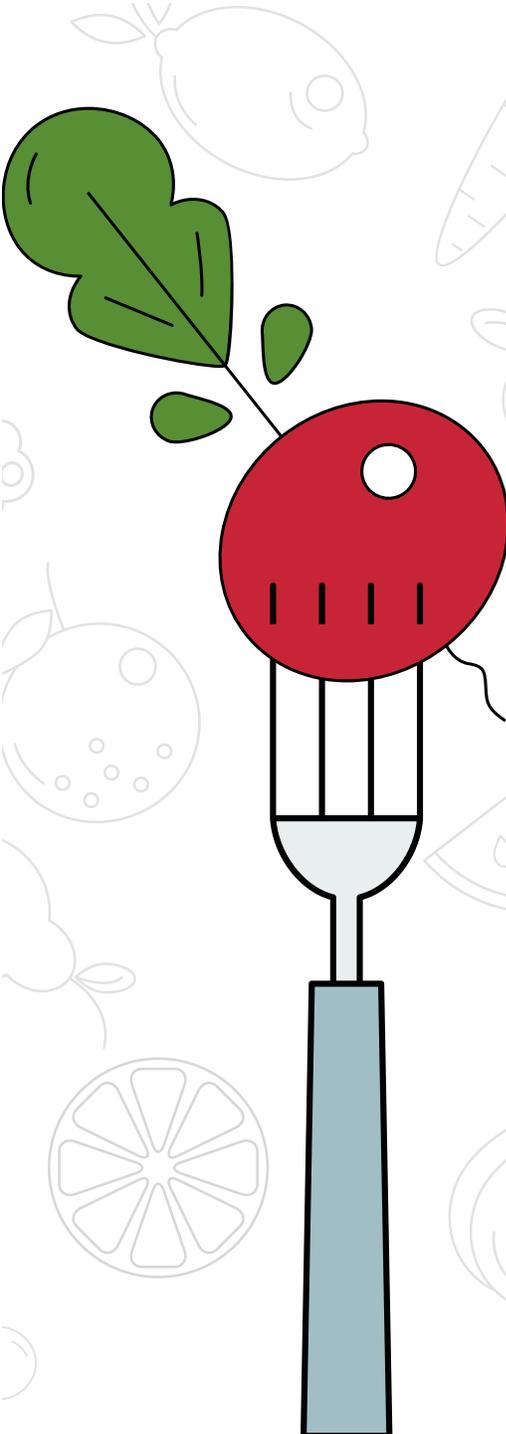
Drink water or herbal tea instead of sugary drinks: Cut calories by drinking water or unsweetened beverages. Soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar and calories in American diets. Try adding a slice of lemon, lime, or watermelon, or a splash of 100% juice to your glass of water if you want some flavor.

Eat some seafood: Seafood includes fish (such as salmon, tuna, and trout) and shellfish (such as crab, mussels, and oysters). Seafood has protein, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids (heart-healthy fat). Adults should try to eat at least eight ounces a week of a variety of seafood. Children can eat smaller amounts of seafood as well.

Cut back on solid fats: Eat fewer foods that contain solid fats. The major sources for Americans are cakes, cookies, and other desserts (often made with butter, margarine, or shortening). Too much pizza, fatty meats (such as sausages, hot dogs, bacon, ribs,) and ice cream can contribute to poorer health and weight gain.

How, when, why, and where we eat are just as important as what we eat. Develop a mindful eating pattern that includes nutritious and flavorful foods—that's the best way to savor the flavor of eating right!

(Article courtesy of eatright.org)



Stretching: Focus on Flexibility

Stretching can help improve flexibility, and increase the range of motion in your joints. Better flexibility will improve your performance of physical activities and decrease your risk of injuries by helping your joints move through their full range of motion and enabling your muscles to work more effectively.

Use these tips to keep stretching safe:

Don't consider stretching a warm-up. You may hurt yourself if you stretch cold muscles. So before stretching, warm up with light walking, jogging, or biking at low intensity for 5-10 minutes. Or better yet, stretch after you exercise when your muscles are warmed up.

Strive for symmetry. Everyone's genetics for flexibility are a bit different, so rather than striving for that gymnast or ballet dancer degree of motion, focus on having equal flexibility side to side (especially if you have a history of a previous injury).

Don't bounce. Stretch in a smooth movement, without bouncing. Bouncing as you stretch can cause injury to your muscle.

Hold your stretch. Hold each stretch for about 30 seconds; in problem areas, you may need to hold for around 60 seconds. Breathe normally as you stretch.

Don't aim for pain. Expect to feel tension while you're stretching, not pain. If it hurts, you've pushed too far.

Bring movement into your stretching. Gentle movement can help you be more flexible in specific movements. The gentle movements of tai chi or yoga, for instance, are a great way to stretch.

Keep up with it. Stretching can be time-consuming. But you can achieve the most benefits by stretching regularly, at least two to three times a week.

Finally, don't think that because you stretch you can't get injured. Stretching, for instance, won't prevent an overuse injury. Talk to your doctor or physical therapist about the most appropriate way to stretch if you have any health concerns.

(Article courtesy of the Mayo Clinic)

Recipe: Lentil Chili



This hearty soup is a delicious, healthy choice for the chilly days of late winter and early spring.

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. olive oil	1 bay leaf
1 medium onion, chopped	2 (32 oz.) cartons low-sodium vegetable stock or chicken stock
1 large red bell pepper, chopped	½ cup fresh chopped cilantro
5 cloves garlic, minced	Sea salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste
4 tsp. chili powder	Optional toppings: sour cream, cheddar cheese, croutons, tortilla chips, avocado
1 (16 oz.) bag of brown lentils	
2 (14.5 oz.) cans no-salt diced tomatoes	

Nutrition Information per serving (makes 8 servings): 347 calories | 11 g fat | 6 mg cholesterol | 388 mg sodium | 52 g carbohydrates | 9.3 g dietary fiber | 21 g protein | 9 g sugar

Preparation

1. In a large soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and red bell pepper; saute the vegetables for 8 minutes or until onion is soft and lightly browned.
2. Stir in garlic and chili powder; cook for 1 minute.
3. Add lentils, tomatoes, bay leaf and vegetable stock. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to medium-low and simmer partially covered for 30 minutes or until lentils are tender. Remove from the heat and discard the bay leaf.
4. Transfer 3 cups of cooked chili into a food processor and process until pureed; add the pureed chili back into the remaining chili and stir to combine. Adjust salt and pepper as needed.
5. Stir in cilantro and serve.

(Recipe courtesy of littlebroken.com)