



Lesson 1—What Is a Healthy Diet?

Introductory Habit for the Week

In this installment, you will learn what makes up good foods, how to navigate your food choices, and how to make a healthful plate.

In addition, you will learn about the power of nutrient-dense foods. Including them in your diet is one way to ensure you are eating healthily for all aspects of your body.

For this week, your nutrition habit is to have a fruit and/or a vegetable at every meal or snack you eat during the day.

What are Nutrient-Dense Foods?

Nutrient-dense foods are foods that:

- Provide substantial amounts of **naturally occurring micronutrients** (vitamins and minerals), which contributes to health and vitality
- Deliver a **complete package of nutrients** (healthy protein, fat, carbohydrate, and water) that the body uses to grow, repair, and fight disease.
- Contain **few calories compared to the total micronutrient content**.

How Do You Choose Nutrient-Dense Foods?

The ideal nutrient-dense foods are vegetables and fruits. For the best body composition, one should aim to eat three times as many vegetables than fruits each day because of the higher calorie and sugar content in fruits. Berries are the exception because they are low in calories and high in water and nutrients. Both vegetables and fruits are nutrient-rich sources of vitamins and minerals that will keep your body healthy and fit.

How Can You Begin Eating These Foods Today?

Including vegetables and fruits in your diet is not as difficult as it may seem. Here are ways to include more vegetables and fruits in each meal of the day.

For Breakfast:

- 1) Cook eggs for breakfast, but add in a handful of baby spinach or mixed greens and include sliced mushrooms, tomatoes, or bell peppers.
- 2) If you are usually in a rush, boil eggs and cook a small sweet potato the night prior to a busy morning.
- 3) If you have toast, choose sprouted-grain bread and top it with natural peanut butter and a sliced banana. For a vegetable addition, you can have savory toast with a slice of low-fat mozzarella cheese, and slices of tomato and cucumber.
- 4) Mix low-fat cottage cheese with slivered almonds and frozen/thawed berries (or fresh berries in the summer).

For a Snack:

- 1) Have baby carrots and sliced cucumbers with hummus.
- 2) Mix plain Greek yogurt with berries and crushed walnuts.
- 3) Have a sliced apple or pear with natural peanut butter.
- 4) Have sliced mixed vegetables that you enjoy (bell peppers, celery, cucumbers, carrots, etc.) with string cheese or Laughing Cow cheese wedges.

For Lunch:

- 1) Load up a big salad with all the vegetables you love; a healthy protein such as turkey, tuna, or eggs; and a topping of balsamic vinegar and olive oil.
- 2) Prepare a Salad Wrap by wrapping sliced chicken or beef with shredded cabbage and bean sprouts in a large Boston Bibb Lettuce leaf.
- 3) Eat a vegetable soup with an apple and a side salad.

For Dinner:

- 1) Include both a steamed and a fresh vegetable on your plate; for example, have steamed kale with a baby spinach side salad.
- 2) Mix vegetables with your favorite grain. For example, stir snow peas and bean sprouts with rice, or add chopped cucumber and tomato to quinoa.
- 3) Have a hearty vegetable stew or soup. Load it with summer squash, tomatoes, potatoes, and any vegetables you love—and even those you don't necessarily love but know are good for you!

Healthy and Yummy Vegetable Recipes

These tips will bring you so far. The next step is to follow some tried and true recipes that are both nutritious and delicious.

Butternut Squash Fries

Ingredients

- 1 large Butternut Squash
- Olive Oil
- Salt/Pepper/Herb Seasoning

Preparation

- 1) Preheat oven to 385° F.
- 2) Peel and seed the butternut squash. To do so, use either a very sharp kitchen knife or a potato peeler. If using a knife, cut the squash in half through the middle to give you a flat surface to peel.
- 3) Once peeled, cut the squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds.
- 4) Then, cut the squash into slices to resemble wedge-cut French Fries.
- 5) Spread out the slices on a non-stick baking sheet, and coat with a thin layer (or spray) of olive oil.
- 6) Season with salt, pepper, or a salt-free seasoning blend (found in most grocery stores) that you enjoy.
- 7) Bake for 20-25 minutes until slices are soft. They will not be crunchy like deep-fried French fries, but they will be delicious.

Baked Eggplant “Pizzas”

Ingredients

- 2 medium eggplants, peeled and cut into 1" thick slices
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 2 cup dried bread crumbs
- 1 Tbs. fresh or dried oregano
- 1 tsp. salt

- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preparation

- 1) Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2) Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.
- 3) Spread each slice of eggplant on one side with about 1 teaspoon of the tomato sauce. In a bowl, combine bread crumbs, oregano, salt, and pepper.
- 4) Dip each slice of eggplant into mixture, coating both sides.
- 5) Shake off excess.
- 6) Lay slices on prepared baking sheet and sprinkle with Parmesan.
- 7) Bake for about 15 minutes or until browned.
- 8) Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Keeping Track of Your Progress

Please use the following table to record your intake of fruits and vegetables with each meal and snack you consume each day. Aim to consume a vegetable and/or fruit every time you eat.

In each box, record the vegetable and/or fruit you ate for that meal. If you didn't eat either, put an X in the box.						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Breakfast						
Snack						
Lunch						
Snack						
Dinner						