

HO 12.2 Food Prep Pointers

Preparing foods at home gives you the most control over the nutritional content of your diet. Maximize this control by trying out a few of these healthy cooking tips related to your HEED goals.

Balancing Calories

- Make over your recipes so that they're lower in fat and calories.
- Purchase cookbooks or download recipes that display the nutritional content (calories, fat, protein, fiber) for the particular recipe.
- Take time to enjoy the food you make. It takes 20 minutes for your brain to get the signal that your stomach is full.
- Plant a vegetable garden at your home or somewhere in your community. All of the digging and weeding will help you get some physical activity, and all of the fruits and vegetables that you grow will provide you with a selection of produce to cook with.
- Prepare quick and easy recipes. Use the time you save for a walk before dinner.

Increasing Fruits and Vegetables

- Add fruits to muffins, pancakes, salads, and desserts.
- Add vegetables (broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, spinach, tomatoes) to quiche fillings, casseroles, sauces, salads, soups, and stews.
- Reduce the meat in recipes and replace with vegetables.
- To retain nutrients and flavor in vegetables, microwave or steam your vegetables instead of boiling them.
- Try adding vegetable salsas and fruit chutneys as accompaniments to meat and poultry.
- Choose dessert recipes that have fruit as the primary ingredient (e.g., fresh or stewed fruit, fruit cobblers).

Increasing Whole Grains

- Choose whole-grain products (whole-wheat flour and bread, bulgur, brown rice, oatmeal, whole cornmeal, barley) instead of highly refined products.
- Try replacing half of the all-purpose flour in your favorite recipe with whole-wheat flour.
- Look for recipes that use grains you've never tried before (such as bulgur, barley, couscous, millet, buckwheat, quinoa).
- Cooking breakfast does not have to involve frying pans, eggs, and bacon! Prepare yourself and your family a bowl of whole-grain, high-fiber cereal topped with fruit.
- For a snack, make a yogurt parfait made with bananas, low-fat yogurt, and whole-grain cereal.

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Increasing Dairy and Dairy Alternatives

- Blend up a calcium-rich smoothie with 1/2 cup juice; 1/2 cup chopped mango, banana, or other soft fruit; 1 carton of strawberry yogurt; and 5 ice cubes.
- For breakfast, try a bowl of whole-grain, high-fiber cereal topped with fruit and low-fat milk or yogurt.
- For snack, try a yogurt parfait made with bananas, low-fat yogurt, and whole-grain cereal.
- Add nonfat powdered milk to recipes for a calcium boost.

Decreasing Unhealthy Fats and Added Sugars

- Reduce oils, fats, and shortening in baked products (breads, muffins, cookies, cakes) by one-fourth to one-third.
- Try replacing half to all of the fat in muffins or snack cakes with prune puree, low-fat yogurt, or unsweetened applesauce. For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup (235 grams) of fat, use 1/2 cup (125 grams) unsweetened applesauce and 1/2 cup (115 grams) butter, margarine, oil, or shortening. Using unsweetened applesauce or no-sugar-added yogurt also reduces the amount of sugar.
- Use nonstick pans or cooking spray when browning, pan-frying, or sautéing.
- Prepare lean cuts of meat (look for "loin" or "round" in the name) and trim off visible fat and skin before cooking or serving.
- Bake, broil, grill, poach, or microwave meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying in oil.
- Use reduced-calorie sour cream and mayonnaise in recipes.
- Use nonfat or low-fat milk in recipes. If you are looking for a rich flavor, try evaporated skim milk.
- Cut back on the amount of cheese added to casseroles and main dishes; use lower-fat feta, cream, cheddar, Swiss, and mozzarella cheeses.
- Substitute two egg whites or egg substitute for whole eggs in recipes.
- Prepare pastas with tomato sauce rather than creamy white sauces
- Use herbs, spices, vinegars, mustards, and peppers to add flavor without fat.
- Choose low-fat dressings and dips to top your raw vegetables or salad.
- Use sugar substitutes when possible to replace added sugars.

Decreasing Sodium and Salt

- Cut back on salt by using less than the recipe calls for, and gradually cut back even more.
- For times when you can't cook, dilute the sodium of takeout or frozen family meals by adding equal amounts of fresh steamed vegetables.
- Use salt-free plain frozen vegetables, dried beans, chickpeas, and vegetables canned without salt in your casseroles and soups.
- Toast dried herbs and spices in a small amount of unsaturated oil to add flavor to dishes such as chili, without using as much or any salt.
- Make your own salad dressings, since premade dressings tend to be high in sodium.
- Replace ketchup with homemade salsa, or look for salt-free ketchup. Use low-sodium condiments such as low-sodium soy sauce.