

How to Choose Healthy Foods



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We face a lot of decisions when it comes to food. What kind of sandwich should I order? What kind of bread? Should I snack on cheese or popcorn?

With all the options available, it can be easy to get overwhelmed. But staying motivated to eat healthy doesn't mean giving up all the foods you love. It's all about moderation, says **Shelly Buehler**, Nutrition Clinic coordinator at AdventHealth Shawnee Mission.

"If we try to choose healthy foods most of the time, an occasional splurge is fine," she says. "It's not about being perfect. It's about finding healthy foods that give us energy to stay healthy and active."

At AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, we focus on whole-person health through the faith-based CREATION Life principles. The "N" stands for Nutrition, which gives us the fuel we need for healthy

bodies and minds.

CREATION Life also includes "C" for Choice. The daily choices we make can help improve our health and well-being. To help make better food choices, Buehler suggests the following tips.

Fill up on vegetables and fruits

According to the USDA's MyPlate guidelines, half of our plate should include fruits and vegetables. Find ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into each of your meals. Try dicing up peppers to put in your omelet. Add romaine lettuce to your sandwich. If you have picky eaters in the family, try visiting a farmer's market and ask for their help to choose vegetables and fruits.

Choose whole grains

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that half of the grains you eat each day should come from whole

grains. Look for whole grain foods that have 3 grams of fiber or more per serving. To get more in your diet, swap your white bread for whole wheat bread and try brown rice instead of white rice. Whole grains are also found in oats, quinoa and barley.

Monitor your proteins

When it comes to protein, we need less than many people think. "I talk to patients about keeping serving sizes of meat to a deck of playing cards or the palm of your hand," says Buehler. She recommends choosing leaner meats such as fish, chicken and turkey. If you're looking for a meatless meal, you can get protein from other sources like eggs, legumes, tofu and soy.

Opt for reduced fat dairy

Dairy provides calcium and vitamin D to help keep our bones healthy. When drinking milk, reach for skim

or 1 percent milk over whole. Look for reduced fat options in foods like cottage cheese and string cheese, as well as low fat yogurt.

Include heart healthy fats

Not all fats are created equal—some can benefit your health. "Monounsaturated fats are better than saturated fats because they can help lower bad cholesterol," says Buehler. To get more heart healthy fats, try cooking with olive oil or canola oil. Monounsaturated fats are also found in nuts, seeds, avocados and olives.

Plan your meals

Life gets busy and sometimes it seems easier to eat out rather than cook. Preplanning our meals can help make it easier to cook healthy foods throughout the week. Buehler suggests getting the family together to look online for new recipes and help prepare the meals. "Sometimes we just need new ideas," she says. "And by involving the whole family, we can develop a menu plan that everyone's happy with."

Ann Muder is a writer/editor for AdventHealth Shawnee Mission.