# Eating Habits for Better Health

Sutter Health

Healthy eating can help you prevent illness and improve your health. It is never too late to start. Even small changes in what you eat now can make a big difference!

Fill Your Plate With Healthy Foods

Rethink your plate

Start by adding more foods to your plate that are full of nutrients. To get the right mix of foods, fill 1/2 your plate with vegetables and fruit, 1/4 with a healthy protein (such as beans, chicken, fish), and 1/4 with a whole grain or starchy vegetable (such as brown rice or a sweet potato).

Vegetables/Fruits   Protein

Whole Grain or Starch
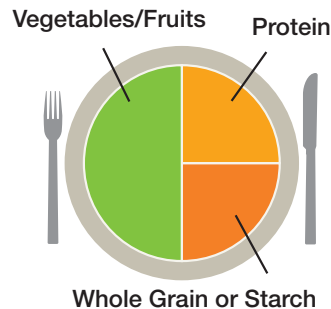
Add more vegetables and fruits

Enjoy plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Choose a rainbow of colors. Make fruits and vegetables a main ingredient in every meal. When choosing frozen or canned, stay away from added sauces, salt (sodium) or sugar.

Choose whole grains

Not all grains are the same. At least half the servings of grains you eat each day should be whole grains. Enjoy whole-wheat pasta and bread, plus brown rice, barley, oatmeal, shredded wheat cereal, or popcorn. Eat less of refined grains such as white rice and items made from white wheat (pastries, pasta or bread).

Choose healthier proteins

Choose more lentils, beans, poultry, fish and nuts. Try to eat fish at least twice a week. When eating poultry, choose lean options and remove skin. Eat red meat less often and in smaller portions. Try replacing meats with healthy plant proteins like beans or tofu. Enjoy a small handful of nuts as a snack.

Switch to low-fat or fat-free dairy

Low-fat and fat-free dairy products have the same nutrients as full-fat dairy products but have fewer calories and less saturated fat (unhealthy fat). Try low-fat yogurt for breakfast with fresh fruit.

Additional Resources
- *choosemyplate.gov*
  United States Department of Agriculture
- *heart.org*
  American Heart Association

Sutter Resources

To find out more about nutrition, go to *sutterhealth.org/health/nutrition*.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral to a registered dietitian to make a personal eating plan.

You may find local resources by going to *sutterhealth.org/classes-events* and selecting the topic "Nutrition."

Why It Matters

Over time, unhealthy foods can cause harm to your body. For example, drinking one or more soft drinks each day increases your risk for type 2 diabetes. Health problems like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes can be linked to unhealthy eating patterns. Taking steps to eat healthier now can help you prevent disease in the future.

Eat Smarter

Cook with healthy oils, herbs and spices

Choose olive, canola or avocado oils. Try baking, broiling or grilling in place of frying. Use herbs and spices instead of salt.

Eat more home-cooked meals

Whether you pack a lunch or eat dinner at home, you will save money and eat healthier. Restaurant and fast foods often come in large portions and are high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar.

Feed your cravings wisely

In the mood for a crunchy snack? Try nuts and seeds, veggies and hummus, or homemade popcorn. Feeling like eating a sweet? Grab an orange, berries, dried fruit, or unsweetened applesauce.

Do not skip meals

Eat throughout the day so you do not get too hungry. Try having three meals a day, or five smaller meals.

Drink more water

Stay hydrated with water instead of sugary drinks and alcohol. Keep a reusable water bottle with you for water on the go.

Watch for Fat, Salt and Sugar

Most processed foods are high in unhealthy fats (saturated and trans fats), salt (sodium) and added sugars. Cut back on these foods. When you do eat processed foods, choose smaller amounts.

Limit or skip these processed foods:

- Processed meats and cheeses: bacon, hot dogs, deli meats, sausage, canned cheese
- Solid fats: fatty beef, butter, lard, stick margarine, vegetable shortening
- Fast foods, especially fried foods
- Snack foods and desserts: chips, crackers, pastries, sweets
- Sugar-sweetened beverages: soft drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks

Read food labels

Compare food labels, then choose options lower in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars, with zero trans fat. Avoid foods with partially hydrogenated oils as an ingredient. Eat no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.

Beware of Fad Diets

If you want to start a new diet, talk to your doctor first to see if it is a good fit for you. Beware of "fad" diets, pills and products that promise fast weight loss or improbable health benefits. Most do not support long-term health, and some can even be dangerous.

What Are Processed Foods?

Processed foods are generally any packaged food with a nutrition label. Many are high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar such as snack foods, frozen meals and processed meats. Choose options lower in saturated fat, sodium (salt) and added sugars. Avoid foods with partially hydrogenated oils.