

## **How do I shop for healthy food?**

Which is better for you; fresh, frozen or canned vegetables? What cuts of meat are the leanest? What is the difference between whole-wheat and white bread? This page answers these questions and gives tips for shopping for healthy food.

### **Grains**

-A kernel of wheat is made up of four components: the husk, endosperm, bran, and the germ. The endosperm contains mostly starch whereas the other components are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein. White bread is made with only the endosperm, which means it's high in starch and low in vitamins, minerals and fiber. Whole-wheat bread contains all parts but the husk, which is why it is higher in nutrients and fiber.

*From Brown; Understanding Food*

-The above principle can be applied to other grain products like pasta, rice, cereal, tortillas, bagels and pitas. Opt for whole-grain versions of these foods over the regular "white" versions for increased nutrient and fiber consumption.

-Where can you find a good portion of your daily fiber? In your cereal bowl. Look for cereals that contain at least 4-5 grams of fiber per serving to help you meet the recommended 25-30 grams/day.

-Although tempting, steer clear of bakery goods like croissants, biscuits, doughnuts, cupcakes, cookies etc. These tend to be high in fat and cholesterol and low in nutrients.

-The chips and snack aisle seems to be popular among college students. Popcorn is a late night favorite and by itself (without butter) is a healthful snack. It's naturally low in calories and fat. For healthy popcorn you can invest in an air popper or look for light versions in the microwaveable section. Chips seem to be getting healthier with more baked versions available. Baked are lower in fat and calories than regular, but are still shy on nutrients. Also, choose snacks that are free of trans fats (hydrogenated oils).

### **Vegetables and Fruits**

- For the best flavor and nutrients select fresh vegetables and fruits. When your favorites aren't in season or if you're shopping on a budget, frozen varieties come in a close second. Since canned fruits and vegetables sit in water for long periods of time, a lot of nutrients are leached out of the food. Canned vegetables often have added salt and fruits have added sugar. When you have to use canned, rinse the fruit or vegetables with water before serving to remove excess sugar or salt. Also look for the light versions. For example choose canned peaches in water over peaches in heavy syrup.

## **Milk**

-Any food with the word *cream* in it contains a lot of fat and cholesterol. Examples; cream cheese, whipping cream, dairy coffee creamer, and ice cream. Higher fat milk contains more cream than skim or 2% versions, and hence more fat and cholesterol. Soy milk is also a healthy alternative to high fat milk. It has all the benefits of cow's milk with the added benefit of soy protein which has been shown to decrease risk of heart disease and some cancers. Do you know which milk contains the most calcium? Skim.

-Select "low-moisture, part skim" versions of your favorite cheeses. They are lower in fat and cholesterol.

-Light yogurt is a great alternative to regular. It has less fat and calories and is high in calcium and protein.

## **Meat**

-Choose poultry, fish, beans and nuts for lower fat sources of protein. Some fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel and herring is considered "fatty", but this is healthy fat. Fish oils are rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids which have been shown to decrease the risk of heart disease.

-Leaner beef cuts include the loin and round. Always trim visible fat from meat and poultry before cooking. All ground beef should have a code that tells you how lean it is. The package will have a number like 96/4, 90/10 or 70/30. The bottom number shows you the percentage of fat the meat contains. Therefore if you purchase 90/10, the meat is 10% fat and 90% lean. The leaner choices have less fat and cholesterol, but will not be as moist or tender after cooking. Select the percentage that best meets your needs.

-Beans are low in fat and a great source of protein and fiber. You can purchase them in canned or dry varieties. The nutrient values are similar, but dry beans take several hours to prepare. Beans have gotten a bad reputation for causing gas when consumed. The truth is the sauce beans are packed in is the real culprit. The sauce contains sugars which form gas in the GI tract. So for tasty beans without the stinky side effects, rinse them well with water before cooking.

-Peanut butter is great on crackers, sandwiches, relishes, and fruits. It's high in protein as well as fat. Do you know how much cholesterol peanut butter has? None. Cholesterol only comes from animal sources. Since peanuts are a plant source of fat, it's a healthier fat. Natural peanut butter is even better for you because it has less additives, but may take a while to get used to the flavor. It's more coarse and bland than non-natural versions.

-Eggs are also a great source of protein. If you eat eggs frequently, try to eat 1 or less yolks per day. One yolk contains your day's worth of cholesterol.

### **Oils and Fats**

-Which is better for you; margarine or butter? Neither. They have similar calories, fat and are metabolized the same way. For a good alternative to these fatty condiments, try light tub margarine or spray margarine. Many spray margarines have 0 calories and fat.

-How do you choose healthier fats? Here is a crash course in what to look for:

Monounsaturated: Look for products high in these fatty acids.  
Monounsaturated fats decrease bad cholesterol while keeping good cholesterol the same.

Polyunsaturated: Look for foods with lower content of these fatty acids.  
These fats decrease both good and bad cholesterol.

Saturated: Your choices should be low in these fatty acids.  
These fats increase both bad cholesterol and good cholesterol.

Trans Fats: Your choices should be low in trans fats (hydrogenated oils).  
These fats increase bad cholesterol and decrease good cholesterol.

Use the following as a guide to choosing oils to bake and cook with:

Oils high in monounsaturated-choose more often  
Olive, canola, and peanut oil

Oils high in polyunsaturated-choose seldom  
Safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean and cottonseed oils

Oils high in saturated-choose rarely if ever  
Coconut, butter, palm, lard