



Modifying Recipes and Menus to Meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

By carefully purchasing foods, preparing foods in different ways or substituting ingredients, diets can be made healthier. On the following pages, suggestions for reducing the fat, salt and sugar, and increasing the amount of fiber in recipes are provided. Fats, salt and sugar are important elements of healthy diets when consumed in moderation.

When purchasing foods, compare the ingredient lists and nutrition panels on the labels of several brands of a food product. Select the brand that contains the least amount of fat, salt and sugar, and the greatest amount of fiber.

When modifying recipes, it is best to make one modification in a recipe at a time. Reduce or increase the amount of the ingredient to be modified by a small amount at first. Try additional modifications in the recipe later.

Baked products require more careful adjustments than casseroles or soups. For example, drastically reducing the amount of sugar in a cake or the fat in biscuits may result in unsatisfactory products. A reduction in fat or sugar may require a slight increase in the amount of liquid used.

Every ingredient has an important role in the production of a satisfactory final product.

- Fat

Fat provides flavor and richness, improves texture and tenderness in baked goods, promotes flakiness and lightness in baked goods, and makes foods smooth and creamy.

- Eggs

Eggs provide structure, act as thickeners and emulsifiers (help mix fat and water), and add volume to foods when beaten.

- Sugar

Sugar provides flavor, increases tenderness and browning in baked goods, acts as a preservative in jams, jellies and pickles, and helps yeast products rise.

- Salt

Salt provides flavor, slows or reduces the action of yeast in yeast breads, and acts as a preservative in canned goods and some dried foods.





Suggestions for Reducing Fat

- Use reduced fat (2%), low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk rather than whole milk.
- Replace sour cream with low-fat sour cream or low-fat yogurt. Add one tablespoon of cornstarch to every one cup of yogurt to prevent separation when heating. A recipe for a “sour cream substitute” is provided on the following page.
- Blend mayonnaise with low-fat cottage cheese for a low-fat mayonnaise substitute or purchase commercial low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise.
- Purchase water-packed tuna rather than oil-packed tuna.
- Use low-fat varieties of cheese such as part-skim mozzarella, farmer cheese, muenster, provolone or reduced-fat cheddar or American cheese.
- Choose ground beef that is at least 80% lean (less than 20% fat).
- Substitute lean ground turkey for all or part of ground beef in recipes.
- Remove skin from poultry and trim off fat.
- Chill soups, gravies and stews. Skim off hardened fat before reheating to serve.
- Trim off all visible fat from meats.
- Drain all fat from cooked meats.
- Serve meat and potatoes without gravy.
- Use spices, herbs and/or lemon juice rather than butter or margarine on vegetables.
- Substitute two egg whites for each whole egg in most muffin, cookie or pudding recipes.
- Limit the use of condensed soups. Try the recipe for low-fat condensed soup substitute on the next page.
- Use buttermilk, milk or egg white instead of whole egg to bind breading on chicken.
- Use half the specified amount of oil to saute or brown foods.
- Substitute applesauce for one-half of the butter or margarine in cookies or cakes.
- Use no more than one egg per one cup of flour in pancakes.
- Bake, broil or roast meat rather than frying.
- Replace frankfurters, bologna or other processed meat with lean meat, poultry or fish.
- Limit the use of pan-fried or deep-fat-fried foods.
- Limit the use of high-fat crackers and breads such as croissants and some muffins and specialty breads.
- Garnish fish with lemon juice rather than tartar sauce or purchase low fat tartar sauce.



Adults and children need fat in
their diets every day.

Low-fat Condensed Soup Substitute

1 tablespoon butter or margarine
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup skim milk
1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)
1/4 cup chopped celery, sliced cooked
mushrooms, or cooked chicken (optional)

1. Melt margarine. Stir in flour.
2. Add milk gradually.
3. Stir over low heat until thick
4. Add one or more of the optional ingredients, if desired.

This recipe replaces one can of condensed soup.

Sour Cream Substitute

1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1. Combine cottage cheese and lemon juice.
2. Whirl in a blender or beat until smooth.

This recipe makes one cup of sour cream substitute.

Suggestions for Reducing Sodium

- Omit or reduce by one-half the amount of table salt in most recipes.
- Include a variety of spices, seasonings, herbs and vegetables in recipes rather than table salt. For example, try chives, dill, garlic or vinegar on cucumbers; serve green beans with lemon juice or sauteed onions; top potatoes with parsley; try bay leaf, fresh mushrooms, onion or thyme on beef; season poultry with lemon juice, marjoram, fresh mushrooms, paprika, parsley, sage or thyme; or season fish with bay leaf, curry powder, lemon juice, fresh mushrooms or paprika.
- Try the three low-sodium seasoning blend recipes included on the following page.
- Decrease the use of celery salt, seasoned salt, soy sauce, monosodium glutamate (MSG), Worcestershire sauce or bouillon cubes.
- Use garlic or onion powder in place of garlic or onion salt.
- Make soup stock from turkey, chicken or beef bones, limiting the amount of bouillon base added.
- Use fresh or frozen foods rather than canned foods or use low salt or low sodium canned foods.
- Serve processed meats only occasionally.



Seasoning Blend #1

a low-sodium "all-purpose" seasoning for meats, vegetables and tomato-based foods

2 tablespoons dry mustard
2 tablespoons onion powder
2 tablespoons paprika
2-3 teaspoons black or white pepper
2 teaspoons thyme
1/2 teaspoon ground basil

Blend spices thoroughly. Store extra seasoning in tightly covered glass bottle.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup seasoning

Seasoning Blend #2



an "all-purpose" seasoning to pep up chicken, hamburger and tomato-based dishes

4 tablespoons onion powder
4 tablespoons parsley flakes, crushed
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder (optional)
2 tablespoons paprika
1 tablespoon ground basil

Blend spices thoroughly. Store extra seasoning in tightly covered glass bottle.

Yield: approximately 3/4 cup seasoning

Seasoning Blend #3

a low-sodium seasoning for pasta sauces or Italian dishes

4 tablespoons dried parsley, crushed
4 teaspoons dried minced onion
1 teaspoon ground oregano
2 teaspoons dried basil, crushed
1 teaspoon ground thyme or marjoram
2 teaspoons celery seed
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Blend spices thoroughly. Store extra seasoning in tightly covered glass bottle.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup seasoning



Suggestions for Reducing Sugar

- Use up to 1/3 less sugar in traditional recipes for cookies, muffins, quick breads and pie fillings. This includes sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, honey and molasses.
- Replace canned fruits packed in heavy syrup with fresh fruits or with canned fruits packed in natural juices or water.
- Limit the use of jams, jellies or flavored gelatins.
- Serve quick breads rather than high-sugar cakes or cookies. Try low fat banana, carrot, cranberry, pumpkin or zucchini bread.
- Serve seasonal fresh fruits for dessert rather than cakes, cookies or pies.



Suggestions for Increasing Fiber

- Substitute whole wheat flour for up to one-half of the all-purpose flour in your favorite bread recipes.
- Substitute beans (kidney, pinto or black beans) for up to one-half of the meat in entrees such as chili or tacos.
- Prepare potatoes with skins, rather than peeled. Encourage the consumption of potato skins, which are high in fiber.
- Add fruits such as chopped apples with skin, raisins or chopped prunes to oatmeal, cookies, cakes and breads.
- Use oatmeal rather than white bread crumbs as an extender in meatloaf or meatballs.
- Serve raw vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and celery for snacks.
- Top cereals with fresh or frozen fruits such as blueberries, bananas or peaches.



Menu Modification

A healthful diet offers a variety of foods, is low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and contains salt and sugar in moderation. Following is an example of how a lunch or supper menu can be made more healthful with simple modifications.

MENU	CALORIES	FAT (GRAMS)
Chicken nuggets (1.5 oz meat equivalent) with BBQ sauce	226 50	15 —
Fried french fries (1/4 cup) with tomato catsup	45 18	2 —
Italian bread (1 slice) with margarine (1 tsp)	73 34	1 4
Peaches in heavy syrup (1/4 cup fruit)	47	—
Whole milk (3/4 cup)	112	6
Total	605***	28 (42% fat)

MENU MAKE-OVER	CALORIES	FAT (GRAMS)
Chicken breast strips, baked (1.5 oz meat equivalent) with 1 tablespoon BBQ sauce	171 24	9 0.1
Salad (lettuce, carrot, tomato, cucumber with mandarin oranges and raisins) 3/8 cup	45	0.1
Whole wheat bread(1 slice) with margarine (1 tsp)	69 34	1 4
Peaches in light syrup* (3/8 cup fruit)	51	—
reduced fat (2%) chocolate milk**(1 cup)	179	5
Total	552***	16.5 (27% fat)

*peaches in light syrup are lower in sugar than peaches in heavy syrup

**reduced fat (2%) chocolate milk is lower in fat than whole milk

***1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for children age 3-5 is 544 calories