

# WELL BALANCED<sup>o</sup>

- MARCH 2023 -  
National Nutrition Month



## MAKING FOOD *Fun* AGAIN

When did food stop being fun? Do you have fun food memories from childhood? Maybe it was the fun of revealing what was in your lunchbox, the excitement of trying a new food for the first time, or the wonder of the food ads on television. At some point, food fun was abandoned as a childhood whim and nutrition became a bland topic that often elicits negative emotions.

Here's the reality—we all need food. The average person will eat around 87,600 meals in their lifetime and there is a whole world of flavor, texture, smells, and sensations out there, so we may as well make food fun again!

March is National Nutrition Month, the perfect time to get a refresher on nutrition basics and learn how to make healthy and tasty meals to bring fun back to the table.

- » The average person will eat around 87,600 meals in their lifetime.
- » Want more guidance on nutrition and fun meals that are tailored to you? Talk to your doctor about getting a referral to a Registered Dietitian today.

### Nutrition Basics

#### Fruits and Vegetables

- » Fruits and vegetables have essential nutrients like potassium, fiber, vitamin C, and folate. They also contain carbohydrates which provide the body with the energy it needs for its primary and essential functions.<sup>(1)(2)</sup>

- » Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried/dehydrated, roasted, or pureed into a variety of meals and snacks.
- » 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables are recommended for adults per day.<sup>(3)</sup>

#### Grains

- » Grains contain complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, several B Vitamins, and minerals like iron, magnesium, and selenium. Eating whole grains can aid in healthy digestion and reduce the risk of heart disease.<sup>(4)</sup>
- » Grains include wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, and even corn!
- » 6 ounces of grain are recommended for adults per day.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### Proteins

- » Protein sources contain B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium. Protein is essential to muscle development and function.<sup>(6)</sup>
- » Proteins include all foods made from seafood; meat, poultry, and eggs; beans, peas, lentils, nuts seeds, and soy products.
- » 5 ½ ounces of protein are recommended for adults per day.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### Fats

- » Healthy fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats) contain omega-3 fatty acids that promote brain and nervous function, reduce inflammation, and support heart health.<sup>(7)</sup>
- » Healthy fats include fatty fish, nuts and nut butters, seeds, eggs, oils, and even plants like avocado.
- » 20-35% of your total calories should come from healthy fats.<sup>(7)</sup>

Make sure to have a balance of these nutritional elements in your meals each day to maximize the health benefits of your food fun.

## Making Food Fun

Now that you know the basics, mix and match foods from each category and get creative with staple recipes for some added fun.

**Spaghetti and Meatballs** - Spice up your usual recipe and add diced zucchini to the sauce for added color and nutrients.

**Peanut Butter Toast** - Add extra flavor and sweetness by adding sliced banana and pumpkin seeds on top.

**Cold Cut Sandwich** - Swap mayonnaise for guacamole spread for a pop of green and healthy fats. Add veggies like cucumber, thinly ribboned carrots, or sliced pepper for crunch!

**Breakfast Smoothie** - Turn your favorite desserts into a healthy breakfast smoothie. Try blending almond milk, 1 banana, 1 Tbsp of nut butter, 1 scoop of protein powder, and a teaspoon of cacao powder for a delicious chocolate breakfast treat.

**Chicken Fingers** - Chicken fingers aren't just for the kids menu. Dredge chicken tenders in eggs and roll them in almond flour, garlic powder, salt, pepper, and paprika, and bake in the oven for a fun and healthy dinner. Serve with veggies and dips to complete the meal.

**Fruit Pops** - A favorite spring and summer treat that can be made easily in your own freezer. Buy some popsicle molds, blend fruits and nut milks, and freeze for a fun frozen treat. Try blending mango, banana, spinach, and nut milk for a tangy, green St. Patrick's Day dessert.

**Snacks** - Snacks don't have to be boring and bland. Revive your childhood favorites like ants on a log, apples and peanut butter, chocolate chia pudding, fruit salad, or cheese and crackers.

Get creative. Try new flavors. Remind yourself of the foods you love and find ways to incorporate essential nutrients to keep meals balanced, filling, energizing, and fun!



### Want more resources on nutrition and healthy eating?

Talk to your employer to find out what is available to you through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or employee wellness program.



<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/fruits> <sup>(2)</sup> <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/vegetables> <sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p1116-fruit-vegetable-consumption.html#:~:text=Depending%20on%20their%20age%20and,of%20a%20healthy%20eating%20pattern> <sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains> <sup>(5)</sup> [https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2022-01/SSwMP%20Mini-Poster\\_English\\_Final2022.pdf](https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2022-01/SSwMP%20Mini-Poster_English_Final2022.pdf) <sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/protein-foods#mp-container-706307> <sup>(7)</sup> <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/choose-healthy-fats>