

Healthy Eating: Tips for Cooking Healthy Meals



Many people start changing how they eat by eating fewer snack foods and more healthy meals. Another step you can take is changing how you cook. You may not know it, but how you cook also affects how you eat.

A big part of eating healthy is eating more grains, fruits, and vegetables. One way to do this is to move away from the idea that "meat makes the meal." Instead, think of meat as part of your meal. For example, at least once a week, have main dishes that feature whole wheat pasta, brown rice, dried beans, and vegetables. If you want meat, try mixing in small amounts with these ingredients. For more healthy cooking tips, read on.

If you need help changing your diet, talk to your doctor. He or she may refer you to a registered dietitian, an expert in healthy eating.

Low-fat cooking

Instead of frying foods in lard, shortening, butter, or lots of oil, try these low-fat ways to cook great-tasting food.

Bake in aluminum foil. Using aluminum foil is an easy way to use your oven and still keep your food juicy and full of flavor. Wrap your meat in foil with an herb for seasoning and even a little wine or fat-free broth. Bake fish at 450 degrees for about 15 minutes and meat at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes or until you are sure it is done.

Poach. Poaching is a tasty way to cook fish and skinless chicken. Put your chicken or fish in one layer in a pan. Cover it with water or low-sodium broth. Add a favorite herb or a little wine for flavor. Bring the liquid to a boil using medium-high heat. Then lower the heat and simmer for about 10 to 12 minutes until your meal is done. Your food will absorb the flavor of the liquids.

Stir-fry. When you stir-fry, you slice your meat or chicken thinly so it cooks quickly. Use a nonstick skillet or a wok over medium-high heat. Add the food and constantly stir and turn it. If your food sticks, add a small amount of canola or olive oil, use cooking spray, or use water, wine, or low-sodium broth.

Additional tips

To reduce the fat you get from meat, chicken, and turkey, you can also:

- Select lean cuts. Choose "loin" or "round" cuts graded "USDA Select" or "Choice." Avoid choosing cuts graded "Prime."
- Choose cuts of pork that have "loin" or "leg" in their names.
- Trim fat from meat, and take the skin off of chicken and turkey before you eat it.
- Drain off fat after you brown meat. Better yet, bake or broil the meat, and use a rack to keep it lifted up out of the fat.

- Chill soups and stews. Then skim off the fat, the hard white layer, before reheating and serving.
 - When you use fat, use canola or olive oil instead of butter or lard. Use only a little.
 - Use nonstick pans and cooking sprays.
 - When making pies, do not use a high-fat pie shell. Use a reduced-fat version, such as a graham cracker crust.
 - Rinse cooked ground beef with hot water to lower its fat.
- To reduce sodium in your diet:
- Use frozen or fresh vegetables instead of canned. If you use canned vegetables, drain and rinse them before cooking.
 - Season your food with lemon juice or other spices instead of salt. If you need to limit your potassium, check with your doctor before using a salt substitute.

Ingredient substitution

You can also cut down on fat and eat healthy by using other ingredients.

Instead of:	Choose:
1 cup shortening or lard	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup oil
1 cup oil (in sweet baked goods)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup applesauce
2 tablespoons oil (for sautéing)	2 tablespoons wine or broth
1 cup whole milk	1 cup nonfat milk
1 cup heavy cream	1 cup evaporated skim milk
1 cup sour cream	1 cup nonfat yogurt or nonfat or low-fat sour cream
1 cup cheddar cheese	1 cup low-fat cheddar cheese
8 ounces cream cheese	8 ounces light cream cheese
1 pound ground beef	1 pound ground turkey breast (ground without the skin) or lean ground beef (93% lean)
6 ounces tuna in oil	6 ounces tuna in water
2 eggs	4 egg whites