



Healthy Food Substitutions

Adopting a healthier diet doesn't always mean drastic, sweeping changes. It can be as easy as opting for some simple food substitutions, which can make a big difference to your overall health. Along with consuming whole, unprocessed foods that are high in fiber and low in sodium, here are some specific substitution tips.

Fat

- Retain moisture by replacing fat with fruit juice, skim milk, pureed prunes, baby food, or applesauce in your recipes.
- Use a heart healthy oil (e.g., olive, canola) in place of half the amount of shortening or stick butter.
- Look for non-hydrogenated margarine with plant sterols instead of regular margarine.
- Experiment with Butter Buds or non-fat butter spray to use on rolls or vegetables.

Sugar

- Use half sugar and half alternative sweetener.
- Try artificial sweeteners (check the box for measurements/ingredients).
 - Tip: Splenda measures cup per cup like sugar.
 - Tip: NutraSweet is not recommended for baked goods, as it breaks down at high temperatures.
- Try natural sugars like honey or fruit puree.
- Use less sugar by adding flavor with vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, or ginger.

Eggs

- Use 2 egg whites in place of 1 whole egg.
- Try Egg Beaters – ¼ cup is equal to 1 egg.
- Combine 1 tablespoon flaxseed and 3 tablespoons water to replace 1 egg (let mixture sit 1-2 minutes).

Dairy

- Whether drinking a glass or using in a recipe, choose skim milk over full fat milk to cut down on calories and fat.
- Opt for “light” or “reduced fat” dairy products such as cheese and yogurt. (Avoid “fat-free” dairy products, which often contain added sugar and salt.

Beef

- Use lean beef (e.g., filet, sirloin, 90% ground beef) instead of fatty meats (e.g., ribeye, prime rib)
- Use soy crumbles in place of half the amount of ground beef.
- Use ground poultry breast (white meat).
 - Tip: Check labels for fat content, as sometimes different meats are mixed.

Common Cooking Substitutions

- Swap butter/margarine for Greek yogurt, hummus, or olive oil.
- Replace regular sour cream with light sour cream or low-fat plain yogurt.
- Instead of salt, use of herbs, spices, or flavored vinegars to enhance taste.
- Rather than baking with oil, use non-fat plain yogurt or applesauce.
- Swap regular mayonnaise for light mayonnaise.
- Instead of full-fat salad dressing, try lemon juice, flavored vinegar, or a low-fat, oil-based salad dressing in small amounts.
- Replace 1 ounce of baking chocolate by combining 3 tablespoons cocoa and 1 tablespoon oil.

Indulgences (When you just gotta have it!)

- Use half the amount of chocolate chips/raisins/nuts the recipe recommends.
- Substitute grape nut cereal for nuts or raisins.

Add-Ins for Good Health

- Choose whole grains foods, such as whole-wheat pasta, bread, or cereal.
- Use tofu, yogurt, or avocados when making your favorite dips.
- Add vegetables and fruits with the skins (for added fiber).
- Choose fish, chicken, turkey, and lean cuts of beef.

Take-Home Points

- Resist the urge to splurge just because the fat or sugar has been reduced in a food.
- Keep portion sizes in check—calories still add up even if the recipe has been modified to be low-sugar or low-fat.
- Have fun and be creative when substituting foods in a recipe.
- Look for ways to eliminate, reduce, or substitute, but don't go overboard!
- Remember, not ALL recipes need to be modified.
- A healthy body is a happy body, and all foods can fit in moderation!

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (eatright.org)