



Safe Environments

Healthy Workers

## INTERPRETING THE CANADA FOOD GUIDE: HOW TO EAT YOUR WAY TO A BETTER LIFE

There are so many different foods available to us now that choosing the healthiest options can be confusing. Canada's Food Guide approaches the goal of eating well regarding daily requirements: it tells us which foods we should eat every day to give us the vitamins, minerals and nutrients our bodies require. Eating these foods can save your life. Here is a quick guide to eating well according to the Canada Food Guide.

### TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

- Choose unprocessed foods
- Eat breakfast every day
- Steamed, baked or stir-fried is always better than deep fried
- Read the Nutrition Facts label
- Use fresh or dried herbs, spices, flavoured vinegar or lemon juice instead of salt to enhance the flavour of vegetables
- Make your food a feast for the eyes
- Keep your skin on your potato
- Some fat is essential but keeps it in small amounts
- Trim visible fats from meats
- Choose dark mixed green salads with vegetables or fruit instead of Caesar, Taco, Potato



## EATING WELL

Eating well does not mean eating as much as possible or eating strictly for flavour. It means choosing foods that provide the best source of fuel for your body. Eating well is the best medicine available to us because it is preventative medicine. It can reduce your risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis. Without proper nutrition, your body is more prone to disease, infection, fatigue and poor performance.

Choosing the right diet can help you live longer, avoid illness and in general, live a happier life by giving you the energy you need to live life to the fullest. Instead of feeling exhausted at the end of a work day, you will have energy left over to indulge in other activities, including sports or gardening. Your life will have greater balance, and you will be more fulfilled – all just from eating the right foods. Here's how it works:

## THE FOUR FOOD GROUPS

The Canada Food Guide recommends eating foods every day from each of four essential groups. The nutrients and enzymes in foods from each group work together to activate the maximum food energy for your body, so it's important to choose daily from each of them. Here is a quick summary of the four food groups.

### VEGETABLES AND FRUIT:

These superfoods, with the bulk of the vitamins and nutrients your body needs. Consume them up to three or four times a day. They are healthy in any combination, but the Canada Food Guide recommends eating at least one dark green vegetable each day – examples include broccoli, romaine lettuce, arugula, chard and spinach – and one orange vegetable each day – examples include carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, cantaloupe, peaches and winter squash.

### GRAIN PRODUCTS:

At least half of your grain products should be whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, wild rice, whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta. This is a category in which it is important to read labels: breakfast cereals can be half sugar, and many types of bread are overly refined. Have whole wheat toast or bagels instead of croissants, doughnuts or pastries.

### MILK AND ALTERNATIVES:

This category is mainly about getting enough vitamin D, which has many health benefits: it prevents osteoporosis, boosts the immune system and reduces inflammation. The Food Guide recommends having 500 mL (2 cups) of skim, 1% or 2% milk every day for adequate vitamin D. Yogurt, soy milk and cheese also contain vitamin D, but be sure to read labels because some varieties are higher in sugar and fat. Limit cream cheese, ice cream, coffee cream, whipping cream and sour cream.

### MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES:

This is your source of protein, which is essential for the body to grow and repair itself, and you should have up two to three servings per day. The Canada Food Guide recommends eating lean meat or meat

alternatives every day, including at least two servings of fish each week. Meat alternatives include beans, lentils and tofu, which are also primary sources of protein.

## WHY ARE THESE FOODS GOOD FOR ME?

Foods in the groups outlined by The Canada Food Guide are scientifically proven to be rich in vitamins and minerals that contribute to overall health. For example, meat and other proteins contain vitamin B12, which keeps the body's nerve and blood cells healthy, aids digestion and prevents anemia. Avocados are loaded with vitamin C, which boosts the immune system, prevents cardiovascular disease and improves your body's connective tissue, keeping skin healthy and helping to cushion bones and joints. Pumpkin, cantaloupe and peaches all contain vitamin A, a powerful antioxidant. It is fascinating to cross reference your favorite foods with the vitamins and minerals they contain.

Dietitians or vitamin and mineral guides can give you even more specific information about this, or visit [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/InteractiveNutritionFactsLabel/factsheets/Vitamin\\_and\\_Mineral\\_Chart.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/InteractiveNutritionFactsLabel/factsheets/Vitamin_and_Mineral_Chart.pdf)

## TIPS IN DETAIL

- Choose unprocessed foods. It is better to shop for raw vegetables and cook them at home, combining them with other ingredients to create the foods you love. Starting fresh preserves the natural flavour of food, and when you cook food yourself, you know exactly what you're eating.
- Eat breakfast every day. It will help control hunger later in the day.
- Steamed, baked or stir-fried is always better than deep fried. Steam or microwave vegetables in a small amount of water for a few minutes to retain more nutrients than boiling.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label on food packaging, and choose foods that are lower in trans and saturated fats. Fruit candies, vegetable chips, fruit jams or spreads, ketchup and fruit and vegetable drinks may all be high in fat or sugar content. Examples of sugars include corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose and malt syrup.
- Use fresh or dried herbs, spices, flavoured vinegar or lemon juice instead of salt to enhance the flavour of vegetables.
- Make food a feast for eyes too. Go for colourful fruit such as cantaloupe, watermelon, mangoes, peaches, nectarines, oranges, berries, cherries and grapes.
- Potatoes with the skins on are an excellent source of fibre and vitamins.
- Some fat in the diet is essential but should be limited to small amounts. Get it from unsaturated oils and spreads.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin from poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- Choose dark mixed green salads with vegetables or fruit instead of higher fat Caesar, taco, potato or pasta salads.

## CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE AVAILABLE ONLINE

You can access the Canada's Food Guide online: [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/fn-an/alt\\_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/print\\_eatwell\\_bienmang-eng.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/print_eatwell_bienmang-eng.pdf)

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