

MARCH PREVENTIVE HEALTH TOOLKIT

National Nutrition Month



March is National Nutrition Month. Making healthy food choices can help you feel and look your best and stay active. Eating a well-balanced diet and getting daily physical activity can also help lower your risk of developing chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. It can also protect against certain types of cancer.

Nutritional needs are different from person to person. It varies by age, gender, height, weight and physical activity level. It's important to talk with your doctor about which nutrients you should closely monitor for your overall health.

Learn more with the activities in this toolkit:

- **Eat the rainbow challenge**
- **Nutrition labels explained**
- **Two truths and a lie**

Nutrition is a critical part of health and development. Better nutrition is related to improved infant, child and maternal health, stronger immune systems, safer pregnancy and childbirth, lower risk of non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease), and longevity. (Source: [WHO](#))

Questions?

Email us at Wellness@Medica.com



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Health disparities

Health disparities are preventable differences in health between groups of people due to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, education, economic status, where they live, disability, etc. Health disparities are a complicated and challenging problem around the world. The health of a community is shaped mostly by social factors. For example, having access to healthcare, a safe area to live, racial equity, healthy food, good education, and supportive relationships free of discrimination are all very important to overall health.

People who face health disparities often have a higher risk for diet-related diseases including heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer (breast and colorectal). In the U.S., certain racial and ethnic groups are affected by food insecurity, which is a major social factor for diet-related diseases and cancer.

Did you know?

- 1 in 3 Native Americans live in poverty due to a lack of stable employment and low wages. According to the USDA, only 26% of Native Communities are within one mile of a supermarket, compared to 59% of all people living in the U.S. (Source: [Feeding America](#))
- Nearly 20% of Black individuals experienced food insecurity—more than three times the rate of white households and 22% of Black children live in food insecure households. (Source: [Feeding America](#))
- Latinos are 2.5 times more likely to experience food insecurity than white individuals. And 18.5% of Latino children and 1 in 6 Hispanics experience food insecurity. (Source: [Feeding America](#))
- About 6% of Asian Americans and about 19% of Pacific Islanders are food insecure. (Source: [Feeding America](#))

For more information, please visit:

- [nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov)
- [Food assistance programs](#)
- [Find a local foodbank](#)

Eat the rainbow challenge

This three-week challenge will help you eat a mix of different-colored fruits and vegetables. Different colors of fruit and vegetables have different nutrients and health benefits. Eat a mix of different-colored fruits and vegetables each week and use the chart below to track your progress.

Fruit or vegetable ideas by color	Nutrients + benefits	What fruit(s) or vegetable(s) did you eat each week?
RED + PINK Tomatoes, tomato products, watermelon, apples, cranberries, beets, cherries, grapefruit, red peppers, red grapes, radishes, raspberries, rhubarb, strawberries	Nutrients: Carotenoids (lycopene, ellagic acid, flavones, and quercetin), Flavonoids (hesperidin), vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium Benefits: Antioxidant properties; reduce inflammation, tumor growth and the risk of prostate cancer; lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol; fight harmful free radicals; and support joint tissue	1
		2
		3
ORANGE + YELLOW Sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, squash, peppers, cantaloupe, mango, apricots, oranges, peaches, nectarines, papayas, pineapple, yellow apples	Nutrients: Carotenoids (beta-carotene, alpha-carotene, lycopene, zeaxanthin), flavonoids (hesperidin, flavanones), vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium Benefits: Reduce age-related macular degeneration and the risk of prostate cancer; boost the immune system; lower LDL cholesterol and blood pressure; promote healthy skin and joints; fight harmful free radicals; and help build strong bones	1
		2
		3
GREEN Peppers, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, green grapes, cabbage, Brussel sprouts, avocado, kiwi, honeydew, green onions, peas, zucchini, green beans, cucumbers, asparagus	Nutrients: Chlorophyll, carotenoids (lutein, zeaxanthin), flavonoids, glucosinolates, sulforaphane, indoles, isothiocyanates, folate, vitamins A, C, E and K, calcium, fiber Benefits: Reduce risk for some types of cancer; lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol; aid in digestion; support vision health and strong bones; fight harmful free radicals; and increase muscle strength	1
		2
		3
BLUE + PURPLE Blueberries, blackberries, cherries, eggplant, figs, raisins, plums, prunes, purple grapes, pomegranate	Nutrients: Resveratrol, flavonoids (anthocyanins, quercetin), ellagic acid, vitamin C, fiber Benefits: Reduce inflammation and tumor growth; prevent the risk of stroke and cancer; lower blood pressure and cholesterol; improve memory and cognitive abilities; boost the immune system; and support healthy digestion	1
		2
		3
WHITE + BROWN Bananas, cauliflower, garlic, ginger, jicama, mushrooms, onions, potatoes, parsnips, radishes, shallots, leeks, turnips	Nutrients: Allicin, beta-glucans (fiber), flavonoids, lignans, potassium, folate, vitamins C and K, magnesium, niacin, iron, zinc Benefits: Reduce the risk of colon, prostate and stomach cancers; boost the immune system; lower blood pressure and cholesterol; balance hormone levels; and improve bone strength	1
		2
		3

Nutrition labels explained

The Nutrition Facts label tells you what nutrients are in food or drink and helps you make healthy choices. Use the guide below to help you better understand the information on food labels to make informed choices. To estimate your calorie needs, use [MyPlate Plan](#) or a BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) calculator. Revisit this calculator whenever you feel that your dietary needs have changed.

Serving size

- A serving size tells you how much of food is usually eaten at one time, not how much you should eat or drink.
- It's common for an item to have more than one serving per container.
- The entire nutrition label is based on the serving size, and should be kept in mind when deciding if a food is right for you.

Calories

- This shows the total number of calories per serving.
- A serving of 40 calories is considered low, 100 calories is moderate, and 400 calories is high.
- Your calorie needs may be higher or lower depending on your gender, age, height, weight, and physical activity level.

Nutrients

- This tells you how much of what nutrients are in your food or drink item.
- All labels will list the nutrients you see in the example image. Some labels show additional nutrients listed in this section.
- Try to eat less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Try to eat more dietary fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin D, and potassium.

% Daily value

- The daily value tells you how much of a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to your daily total.
- A daily value of 5% or less is considered low, while a daily value of 20% or more is considered high.
- This percentage is based on a diet of 2,000 calories per day.

Ingredients

- This lists ingredients in descending order. This means that ingredients used in the large amount are listed first, followed by ingredients used in smaller amounts.
- This area will also include ingredients that people may be allergic to such as shellfish, wheat, soy, nuts, or dairy.

Nutrition Facts

Varies servings per container

Serving size 2 cookies (37g)

Amount per serving

Calories 180

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 11g	14%
Saturated Fat 7g	35%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 25mg	8%
Sodium 80mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 20g	7%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 13g	
Includes 12g Added Sugars	24%
Protein 2g	
Vit. D 0mcg 0%	Calcium 28mg 2%
Iron 1mg 6%	Potas. 102mg 2%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: WHITE CHOCOLATE (SUGAR, COCOA BUTTER, MILK, SOY LECITHIN [EMULSIFIER], VANILLA), ENRICHED FLOUR (BLEACHED WHEAT FLOUR, MALTED BARLEY FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMIN MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), BUTTER (CREAM [MILK], SALT), SUGAR, SEMI SWEET CHOCOLATE CHIPS (SUGAR, UNSWEETENED CHOCOLATE, DEXTROSE, COCOA BUTTER, SOY LECITHIN [EMULSIFIER], VANILLA, MILK), BROWN SUGAR, COCOA POWDER (PROCESSED WITH ALKALI), EGGS, MACADAMIA NUTS, SALT.

MADE ON SHARED EQUIPMENT WITH PRODUCTS CONTAINING EGGS, MACADAMIA NUTS, COCONUT AND SOY.

Two truths and a lie

Guess which two facts are true, and which one is a lie. Not all the information has been covered in this toolkit. Have fun and guess, or do some research and learn something new! The answers are at the bottom of the page.

1.
 - a. Dextrose, table sugar, and sugars from honey, syrups, and concentrated fruit or vegetable juices are all examples of added sugars.
 - b. Serving size is the recommended amount that you should eat or drink.
 - c. Nutrients to get more of include dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.
2.
 - a. You have to give up favorite foods to have a healthy diet.
 - b. Drinking more water helps carry nutrients to your cells, reduces hunger, helps your digestive system run more efficiently, and improves energy.
 - c. The % DV can help you figure out if a food is high or low in a nutrient.
3.
 - a. Diets higher in calcium and iron can reduce the risk of osteoporosis and anemia, respectively.
 - b. The terms “fat-free” or “no added sugars” mean “calorie-free”.
 - c. The first ingredient listed on the label makes up the greatest amount in a food, more than any of the other ingredients.
4.
 - a. Nutrients to get less of include saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
 - b. Total sugars include naturally occurring sugars found in foods (i.e., fruit) and any added sugars that may be present in the product.
 - c. A serving is the amount of food you choose to eat for a meal or snack.
5.
 - a. Today, American diets lack vitamins A and C.
 - b. Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables have just as many nutrients (or may even have more) as fresh varieties.
 - c. Diets higher in vitamin D and calcium can reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Resources

[The Nutrition Facts Label \(FDA\)](#)

[Basic Nutrition \(USDA\)](#)

[MyPlate \(USDA\)](#)

[Nutrition Guidelines and Recommendations \(CDC\)](#)

[Wellness and Nutrition \(Medica\)](#)

Answer Key – Two Truths and Lie

1. B is a lie. Serving size is based on the amount of food or drink that is usually consumed, not on how much you should eat.
2. A is a lie. You don't have to give up a favorite food. Use the %DV to make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. When a food you like is high in a nutrient you want less of (or low in a nutrient you want more of), you can balance it with foods that are low or high in that nutrient at other times of the day.
3. B is a lie. Fat-free or no added sugar items may have as many calories as the regular item. Use the label to compare calories and nutrients in both.
4. C is a lie. The amount of food you choose to eat is a portion, not a serving. A serving is an amount of food or drink that is usually eaten, such as a slice of bread or a cup of milk. Foods you eat in one portion may have more than one serving. For example, a 20-ounce soda may be 2-3 servings.
5. A is a lie. In the early 1990's, American diets lacked Vitamins A and C, but now Vitamins A and C deficiencies in the general population are rare. Manufacturers are still able to list these vitamins voluntarily.