

Preparing Everyday Dishes in Healthier Ways

Make these simple swaps in your go-to meals to stay on track with healthy eating at any time of the year.

It's a common misconception, but eating healthy doesn't mean eliminating all of your favorite foods or only eating lean proteins with a side of veggies. You can still enjoy everyday dishes by making a few tweaks in [your own kitchen](#). Try these food prep alternatives to your favorite foods to make them more nutritious and even more indulgent!

French fries

Enjoy oven baked french fries or [oven baked sweet potato fries](#) for a lot fewer calories. If you've got to have regular french fries (because the healthier alternative just won't cut it), make the rest of your meal healthy! For example, have grilled fish or chicken with a side of greens such as asparagus, Brussels sprouts or broccoli. Divvy up a small portion of fries on the side to satisfy your cravings while filling up on other healthy foods.

Stir-fry

For your protein, use edamame, tofu, eggs, turkey, chicken breast, lean beef. Feel free to use a combination! This is a perfect dish to add in tons of delicious veggies such as red onions, mushrooms, bell peppers, purple cabbage, broccoli, zucchini, string beans, ginger, garlic, and shredded carrots. [Frozen or fresh](#) work great - frozen is just as nutritious, and canned veggies can add diversity like water chestnuts. If you want to add a grain, try steamed brown rice or [buckwheat](#) noodles (also tasty once cooked with a little oil and green onion). Then, add in cilantro or other [herbs and spices](#), bean sprouts, roasted unsalted cashews, sesame seeds or green onion for flare! Use a small amount of oil and a dash of sesame oil at the end for more traditional flavor, but make sure to avoid MSG or sauces/flavor packets that contain MSG. Your bowl will be loaded with heart-healthy fiber and phytonutrients with all of the plant-based foods. Quick tip: Freeze fresh ginger and use a food zester or cheese grater whenever you need it. This way it lasts much longer than in the fridge!

Salads

Variety is key! Try out different types of greens such as [kale](#), spinach, arugula, romaine, and collards. Feel free to mix a few different kinds into one salad to keep your taste buds firing! Fresh herbs can also brighten up and elevate a salad while cutting down on sodium. For example, try a combination of basil, mint, and cilantro. Then, aim for at least three different, non-starchy vegetables like tomatoes, roasted broccoli, beets, purple cabbage, shredded carrots or mushrooms. You can also opt for fresh fruits over dried fruits with fewer calories but the same amount of sweetness. Strawberries, pears, [peaches](#), grapes and apples are all easy additions. For protein, toss in chopped grilled chicken, shrimp, tuna fish, a hard-boiled egg, [black beans](#), garbanzo beans, kidney beans, goat cheese, feta cheese, tofu, soybeans or lentils. Mix and

match as you please! If you need a crunch, try to avoid tortilla strips or crunchy noodles and instead, go for sliced almonds, pepitas, sesame seeds or chopped [walnuts](#).

Tacos

Use fresh corn tortillas or whole-wheat flour tortillas for a nutritious base. If you want crispy tacos, try baking the shells in the oven with a little cooking spray or brush with oil. If you don't have shapes to bake the tortillas in, just keep them flat on the pan (tostadas), bake them, and they will work just as good while providing an extra crunch. For the protein, try grilled chicken breast, ground turkey/chicken, tempeh, [tofu](#), or beans. Test your kitchen skills by opting out of the packaged seasoning mixes, and instead, use your own with cumin, oregano, chili powder, and smoked paprika. To finalize your masterpiece, top your tacos with plenty of fresh colorful veggies such as lettuce, purple cabbage, cilantro, onion, green onion, radishes, broccoli slaw, shredded carrots, avocado/[guacamole](#), tomatoes, jalapenos, a squeeze of lime, [mango salsa](#), or fresh or low sodium salsa. If you end up adding in too many toppings to roll up your taco, make it a tostada bowl! With so many options, these [easy bean tacos](#) are a great recipe to start with!

Burgers

The burger patty can make a big difference when it comes to nutrient profile! Start by choosing a bean burger, [salmon](#), turkey, or lean ground chicken. Pile on chopped green onions, red bell peppers, or caramelized onion for a boost of flavor. Add at least two veggies such as tomatoes and mushrooms or avocado and sprouts. Skip the ketchup and spread hummus, Dijon mustard, or salsa on top! For a completely [vegan option](#), try a veggie or Portobello mushroom burger. If you're looking for a smaller meal, skip the bun and opt for a lettuce wrap with crisp romaine lettuce or Bibb lettuce.

Spaghetti with meatballs

Start out by swapping regular pasta for whole-wheat pasta or protein-packed bean pasta. Simple [whole grain](#) swaps like this boost the nutritional value with little to no work on your part! For the meatballs, use lean ground chicken or turkey. You might also be able to find a recipe online for vegetarian meatballs using chickpeas as the base. While your pasta is cooking, saute a bunch of veggies like bell peppers, onion, [garlic](#), tomatoes, zucchini, broccoli, mushrooms, or whatever you have on hand! Instead of dousing the pasta in oil, just use some jarred tomato sauce (no added sugar) or even some balsamic vinegar with just a hint of olive oil.

Chicken soup

Soup is so easy to make, and once you try it, you'll never buy canned again! To make your own chicken soup, use skinless chicken breast or take the skin and extra fat off the chicken. Throw in a bunch of vegetables such as zucchini, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, celery, onion, spinach and bell peppers. Add in fresh herbs such as rosemary, thyme, oregano, chives or basil. Leave the skin on the potatoes for added fiber and quicker prep time. Use low-sodium

chicken broth or water (and add your own salt) instead of flavored packets that contain high amounts of salt and MSG. If you want to explore some other options, give this [Sweet Potato and Carrot Soup](#) a try. This [Fish and Tofu soup](#) is yet another you can try!

Fried chicken

Instead of buying some fried chicken on your way home from work, buy a rotisserie chicken from the grocery store or make your own oven-baked chicken. It can be used for many different dishes throughout the week! If you really want the crispiness of fried chicken, use skinless chicken breasts, good oil and healthy side dishes like roasted veggies. You can also add a salad with a [light dressing](#), mashed or roasted sweet potatoes, and steamed broccoli to top it all off!

Get started by spending a little time in the kitchen and trying one or two new swaps. Small changes go a long way! You can even check out some of our [cost-saving tips](#) before you get going to make sure you're making low cost, delicious meals that will make you want to keep coming back for more!