



Build diet around nutrient-rich foods

I keep hearing about “nutrient-rich” foods. Do you have any ideas on how I could incorporate more into my diet?

Choosing more nutrient-rich (or “nutrient-dense”) foods is how you can get more bang for the buck — or really, more bounce for the ounce — from the foods you eat from every good group.

Calorie for calorie, these foods provide a rich amount of nutrients (such as vitamins and minerals) and contain few, if any, saturated fats, trans fats and added sugars. For example, a cup of 1 percent milk contains 100 calories and offers a wide variety of nutrients: calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A, riboflavin and phosphorus, and also a good amount of protein, vitamin B12 and selenium. Compare that to a cup of non-diet soft drink, which has about the same number of calories but no nutrients to speak of.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers other examples on a page on its MyPyramid web site, <http://www.mypyramid.gov/steps/nutrientdensefoods.html> — click on “Making Smarter Choices — Sample Ideas.” They include choosing plain fat-free yogurt with fresh fruit instead of sweetened fruit yogurt and skinless chicken rather than chicken with skin.

Other tips include:

- Make half the grains you eat — at least 3 ounces a day — whole grains.

Whole-grain foods are made from the entire grain kernel and thus offer the fiber, iron and B vitamins that are removed when grains are milled. Most refined grains are fortified to replace nutrients lost in the processing, but whole grains are still a better bet. Look for “whole grain” (or “whole wheat” or “whole oats,” for example) at the top of the ingredients listing in breads, crackers and cereals, and choose whole-wheat pasta instead of regular.

- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Nutritionists recommend choosing produce with a wide variety of colors to get a broad range of nutrients — the color of fruits and vegetables often indicates what kind of nutrients they contain.

- Choose baked or roasted meats and vegetables over fried.

- Replace water with milk when making oatmeal or instant potatoes, and add dry milk to casseroles or gravy. Using milk adds some calories but offers a boost in calcium and other nutrients.

You can find more ideas from the Nutrient Rich Foods Coalition, <http://nutrientrichfoods.org>, which provides ideas for adding nutrients to meals — even when eating out — as well as shopping lists and a guide to portion control.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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