



## Watch the toppings for a healthy salad

**Over the summer, our salads have gotten more and more elaborate. With cheese, almonds and other toppings, are we being as healthy as we think?**

Salads are great, but you're right to be cautious. You may be adding a lot more fat and calories than you realize.

Here are some tips to building a healthful salad:

- Start with nutrient-rich greens. Bypass the iceberg lettuce, which supplies little to no nutrients, in favor of dark-green lettuce — romaine, green leaf, red leaf or bibb. And, supplement it with other dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale or swiss chard. You'll get a great boost of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients with that switch alone.

- Add a wide variety of other vegetables to your salad: tomatoes, shredded carrots and cabbage, chopped cauliflower and broccoli, sliced bell peppers and cucumbers, sugar-snap peas, and even summer squash. Also, consider adding some beans. They're a great source of fiber and add some bulk and texture.

- Consider adding a bit of sliced avocado or a small amount of olive-oil-based dressing. Both add calories (45 calories per ounce for avocado; 40 per teaspoon for oil) but also help your body absorb the salad's nutrients.

- Experiment with adding fruit. Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries,

kiwi and mandarin oranges can add a lot of punch and increase the variety of nutrients in the salad, as would sprinkling a few raisins or dried cranberries on top.

- When you do add cheese, do so in moderation. Keep it to an ounce or less. Consider using strong-flavored types, such as blue cheese, parmesan or sharp cheddar — you'll see a little goes a long way.

- The same goes for nuts. Nuts are a good addition to any diet, but they're very high in calories, so you need to watch portions -- again, no more than an ounce.

- If you're making the salad a meal and adding meat or fish, make smart choices. Use baked or grilled chicken, not fried chicken strips; add tuna flakes, not tuna mixed with high-calorie, high-fat mayonnaise. Consider adding canned salmon; it's higher in calories and fat, but the fat it contains is high in healthy omega-3s, which most Americans don't get enough of.

- Don't pour on lots of high-calorie salad dressing, especially creamy types. You can easily double or triple the number of calories in a salad just by using a high-calorie dressing.

- Don't use a lot of other high-calorie, low-nutrient toppings, such as croutons, fried tortilla strips, bacon bits or sliced processed meats.

*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](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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**Editor:**

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