

Make National Nutrition Month Count  
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For many people, good nutrition may pose a dilemma: paying no attention to what you eat can jeopardize health; but, being restrictive has its own set of concerns.

What might be the problem with trying to avoid a specific food such as donuts? The more you try to stay away from donuts, the more you think about them. So the very thing you are trying to avoid is even more on your mind. Forbidding yourself to eat donuts makes them even more desirable.

March, which is National Nutrition Month, provides an opportunity to consider a positive approach to eating. Instead of focusing on what not to eat, think about enjoying a variety of nourishing foods. Here are ideas that may appeal to you.

- **Feature fruits and vegetables.** Fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients while low in calories. They contain high levels of antioxidants to aid in disease prevention. Be adventurous! Explore new seasonal fruits and vegetables. How about pluots, Korean pears, white peaches, red chard, bok choy, spaghetti squash? The natural sweetness of fruits can help satisfy sweet cravings.
- **Go for wholesome grains.** Whole grains are sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals. Their chewy, crunchy texture along with generous amount of fiber helps keep hunger at bay. Consider starting your day with a whole grain cereal, pancakes, waffles, or English muffins. For lunch, pair whole wheat pitas, whole bagels, or whole wheat tortillas with a favorite sandwich filling. Try a salad featuring whole wheat pasta, brown rice, or bulgur. To incorporate whole grains into a hearty evening meal, experiment with adding barley to soups or stews, serve a stir fry over brown rice, or make tacos with corn or whole wheat tortillas. Whole grain snack possibilities include popcorn, whole wheat crackers, oatmeal cookies, and whole grain granola bars.
- **Play up lean protein.** Foods such as low fat dairy, lean meats, beans, and soy products are packed with lean protein. Protein-rich foods have a high satiety value helping to keep you feeling full longer. Ideas to incorporate lean protein into meals and snacks include adding beans to soups and salads; making casseroles with lean ground beef, turkey, or soy meat crumbles; enjoying string cheese for a portable snack.
- **Be discriminating and choose beneficial fats.** Foods rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat have numerous health benefits especially in regard to promoting heart health. To include these fats into your daily eating style, use healthful oils such as canola and olive in cooking and meal preparation. When selecting a table spread, look for a soft tub margarine that is trans fat free. Nuts such as peanuts, walnuts, almonds also provide beneficial fats. Enjoy them for snacks or add to salads and grain dishes.

Fish and flax seed are excellent sources of omega 3 fats, a type of polyunsaturated fat, which has been found to help in lowering elevated triglyceride levels, slowing hardening of the arteries, and reducing inflammation. Consider adding shrimp to marinara sauce and serving over pasta, tossing tuna with assorted greens for a main dish salad, making tacos featuring fish or sprinkling ground flax over yogurt, cereal, salads for a nutty taste.

Focusing on beneficial foods creates a positive eating environment so you think less about items with low nutrient value. Also viewing all foods as acceptable and none as forbidden puts the occasional treat into perspective as part of a healthful eating style.

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