

Unit 2 - Independent Living
Healthy Eating

Choose Healthy Foods and Drinks

Healthy eating involves taking control of how much and what types of food you eat, as well as the beverages you drink. Try to replace foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy **fats** with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat protein foods, and fat-free or low-fat dairy foods.

Fruits and Vegetables

Make half of your plate **fruits** and **vegetables**. Dark green, red, and orange vegetables have high levels of the nutrients you need, like vitamin C, calcium, and fiber. Adding tomato and spinach—or any other available greens that you like—to your sandwich is an easy way to get more veggies in your meal.

Grains

Choose **whole grains** like whole-wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal, and whole-grain cereal, instead of **refined-grain** cereals, white bread, and white rice.



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Protein

Power up with low fat or lean meats like turkey or chicken, and other **protein-rich foods**, such as seafood, egg whites, beans, nuts, and tofu.

Dairy

Build **strong bones** with fat-free or low-fat milk products. If you can't digest lactose—the sugar in milk that can cause stomach pain or gas—choose lactose-free milk or soy milk with added calcium. Fat-free or low-fat yogurt is also a good source of dairy food.

Healthy Eating Tips

- Try to limit foods like cookies, candy, frozen desserts, chips, and fries, which often have a lot of sugar, unhealthy fat, and salt.
- For a quick snack, try recharging with a pear, apple, or banana; a small bag of baby carrots; or hummus with sliced veggies.
- Don't add sugar to your food and drinks.
- Drink fat-free or low-fat milk and avoid sugary drinks. Soda, energy drinks, sweet tea, and some juices have added sugars, a source of extra calories. The [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines](#) call for getting less than 10 percent of your daily calories from added sugars.

Fats

Fat is an important part of your diet. Fat helps your body grow and develop, and may even keep your skin and hair healthy. But fats have more calories per gram than protein or carbs, and some are not healthy.

Some fats, such as oils that come from plants and are liquid at room temperature, are better for you than other fats. Foods that contain healthy oils include avocados, olives, nuts, seeds, and seafood such as salmon and tuna fish.

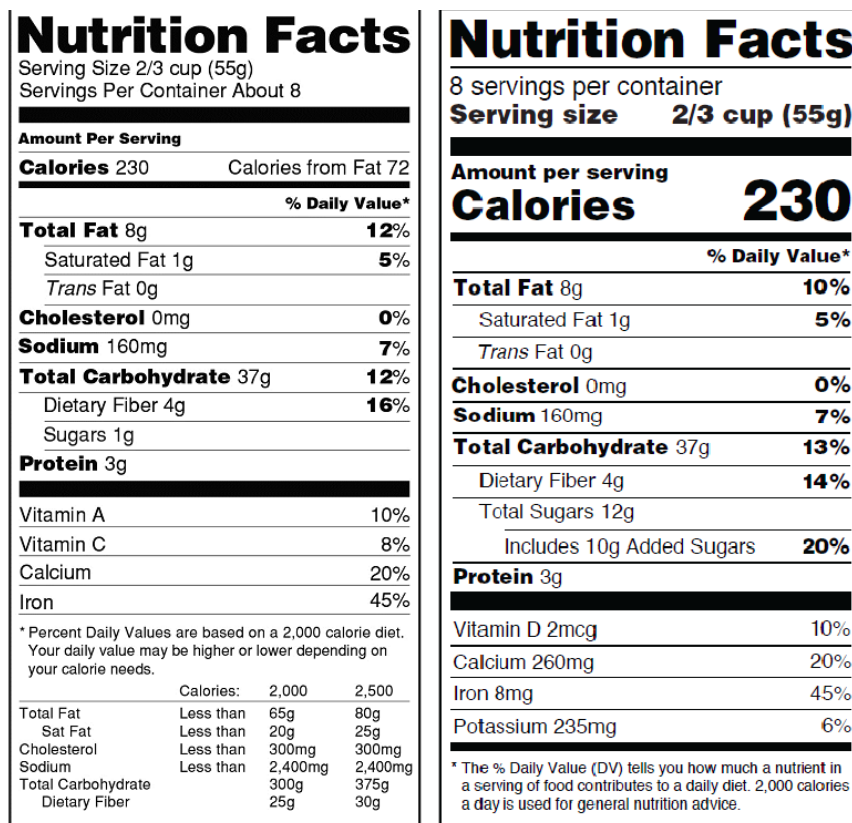
Solid fats such as butter, stick margarine, and lard, are solid at room temperature. These fats often contain [saturated](#) and [trans fats](#), which are not healthy for you. Other foods with saturated fats include fatty meats, and cheese and other dairy products made from whole milk. Take it easy on foods like fried chicken, cheeseburgers, and fries, which often have a lot of saturated and trans fats. Options to consider include a turkey sandwich with mustard or a lean-meat, turkey, or veggie burger.

Your body needs a small amount of [sodium](#), which is mostly found in salt. But getting too much sodium from your foods and drinks can raise your [blood pressure](#), which is unhealthy for your heart and your body in general. Even though you're a teen, it's important to pay attention to your blood pressure and heart health now to prevent health problems as you get older.

Try to consume less than 2,300 mg, or no more than 1 teaspoon, of sodium a day. This amount includes the salt in already prepared food, as well as the salt you add when cooking or eating your food.

Processed foods, like those that are canned or packaged, often have more sodium than unprocessed foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. When you can, choose fresh or frozen fruits and veggies over processed foods. Try adding herbs and spices instead of salt to season your food if you make your own meals. Remember to rinse canned vegetables with water to remove extra salt. If you use packaged foods, check the amount of sodium listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Figure 1 below shows an updated food label, which the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved for use on most packaged foods beginning in 2018.

Figure 1. Side-by-Side Comparison of Original and New Nutrition Facts Label



Current label

Updated label

Source: [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)

Limit added sugars

Some foods, like fruit, are naturally sweet. Other foods, like ice cream and baked desserts, as well as some beverages, have added sugars to make them taste sweet. These sugars add calories but not vitamins or fiber. Try to consume less than 10 percent of your daily calories from added sugars in food and beverages. Reach for an apple or banana instead of a candy bar.

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Did you know?

Many teens need more of these nutrients:

- calcium, to build strong bones and teeth. Good sources of calcium are fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- [vitamin D](#), to keep bones healthy. Good sources of vitamin D include orange juice, whole oranges, tuna, and fat-free or low-fat milk.
- [potassium](#), to help lower blood pressure. Try a banana, or baked potato with the skin, for a potassium boost.
- [fiber](#), to help you stay regular and feel full. Good sources of fiber include beans and celery.
- protein, to power you up and help you grow strong. Peanut butter; eggs; tofu; legumes, such as lentils and peas; and chicken, fish, and low-fat meats are all good sources of protein.
- iron, to help you grow. Red meat contains a form of iron that your body absorbs best. Spinach, beans, peas, and iron-fortified cereals are also sources of iron. You can help your body absorb the iron from these foods better when you also eat foods with vitamin C, like an orange.

Control your food portions

A [portion](#) is how much food or beverage you choose to consume at one time, whether in a restaurant, from a package, at school or a friend's, or at home. Many people consume larger portions than they need, especially when away from home. Ready-to-eat meals—from a restaurant, grocery store, or at school—may give you larger portions than your body needs to stay charged up. The Weight-control Information Network has [tips](#) to help you eat and drink a suitable amount of food and beverages for you, whether you are at home or somewhere else.

Did you know?

Just one super-sized, fast food meal may have more calories than you need in a whole day. And when people are served more food, they may eat or drink more—even if they don't need it. This habit may lead to weight gain. When consuming fast food, choose small portions or healthier options, like a veggie wrap or salad instead of fries or fried chicken.

Be media smart

[Advertisements](#), TV shows, the internet, and social media may affect your food and beverage choices and how you choose to spend your time. Many ads try to get you to consume high-fat foods and sugary drinks. Be aware of some of the tricks ads use to influence you:

- An ad may show a group of teens consuming a food or drink, or using a product to make you think all teens are or should be doing the same. The ad may even use phrases like “all teens need” or “all teens are.”
- Advertisers sometimes show famous people using or recommending a product because they think you will want to buy products that your favorite celebrities use.
- Ads often use cartoon figures to make a food, beverage, or activity look exciting and appealing to young people.

Don't skip meals

Skipping meals might seem like an easy way to lose weight, but it actually may lead to weight gain if you eat more later to make up for it. Even if you're really busy with school and activities, it's important to try not to skip meals. Follow these tips to keep your body charged up all day and to stay healthy: