

Making your favorite recipes healthier

What if I just don't have time to cook? Or prepare my lunch? Or eat breakfast? All common refrains from people who don't realize how easy and fast it can be to prepare your own meals. Cooking doesn't have to be complicated.

Some basic tips for making your favorite recipes healthier include:

- Decrease the meat and increase the vegetables called for in stews and casseroles.
- Choose whole-grain versions of pasta and bread; substitute whole-wheat flour for bleached white flour when you bake.
- Serve imaginative whole-grain side dishes like bulgur or kasha instead of white rice or pasta.
- Cook with less fat by using non-stick skillet.
- Blot all fried meats on paper towels.
- Avoid cooking with soy or Worcestershire sauce and products that contain monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Substitute garlic or onion powder for garlic or onion salt, and use unsalted or low-salt vegetable broths and products.
- Buy reduced-fat cheese or use mozzarella which is naturally lower in fat.
- In recipes calling for milk or cream, substitute 2% or reduced fat versions. This also works well for low-fat cream cheese, yogurt, and mayo.
- Unhealthy fats like certain oils, butter, or margarines can usually be cut by 1/3 to 1/2 in recipes. At first try a small cut-back and then use less and less over time; you'll hardly notice the difference. You can also use fat substitutes like prune purees and applesauce in baked goods.
- Use fresh-frozen fruit without added sugar if fresh is unavailable.
- Cut the sugar called for in most recipes by one-third to one-half.
- Sweeten waffles and quick breads with cinnamon, cardamom, vanilla or almond extracts in order to cut the sugar content.
- Try salsa on a baked potato or salad rather than high-fat dressing or butter.

Learning the basic building blocks of a healthy diet is the first step to eating better and promoting overall health. See [Healthy Eating: Tips for a Healthy Diet](#) for guidelines and suggestions.

Recipes for a heart healthy diet

Harvard Medical School breaks down the basic guidelines for heart healthy eating into the following 5 steps:

1. Eat more liquid (unsaturated) fats, and fewer solid (saturated and trans) fats.
2. Eat more colorful, nutrient-loaded fruits and vegetables, and fewer white potatoes.
3. Eat more fiber-filled whole grains, and fewer refined carbohydrates (white starches).
4. Eat more heart-healthy proteins such as fish, poultry, beans, and low-fat or nonfat dairy products, and less red meat.
5. Eat more potassium-rich fruits and vegetables, and less sodium-rich processed food.

Source: Harvard Health: Healthy Eating for a Healthy Heart