

Tools and Terms

This section provides definitions of many of the key terms used throughout the Power Up! package. They are listed alphabetically for quick reference. For each of the food groups, it also provides information on the health benefits and specific nutrients that are linked to foods in that group.

Added Sugars

Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are added when foods or beverages are processed or prepared. This does not include naturally occurring sugars such as those in milk and fruits. Added sugars provide calories without providing additional nutrients. Specific examples of added sugars that can be listed as an ingredient on a product label include brown sugar, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose and turbinado sugar.

Common sources of added sugars include sugary drinks such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks, coffee and tea with added sugars. The other major source of added sugars is snacks and sweets, which includes grain-based desserts such as cakes, pies, cookies, brownies, doughnuts, sweet rolls, and pastries; dairy desserts such as ice cream, other frozen desserts and puddings; candies; sugars; jams; syrups; and sweet toppings. Together, these food categories make up more than 75 percent of intake of all added sugars.

Calories

Calories are a measurement tool, like inches or ounces. They measure the energy a food or beverage provides. Calories are the fuel your body needs to work and play. Foods and beverages vary in how many calories and nutrients they contain. When choosing what to eat and drink, it's important to get the right mix—enough nutrients, but not too many calories.

Calorie Balance

Everyone has a personal calorie limit. Staying within yours can help you get to or maintain a healthy weight. Reaching a healthier weight is a balancing act – learning how to balance your "calories in" and "calories out" over the long run. "Calories in" are the calories from foods and beverages you have each day. "Calories out" are the calories you burn for basic body functions and physical activity.

- Maintaining weight—In general, your weight will stay the same when the calories you eat and drink equal the calories you burn.
- Losing weight— In general, you will lose weight when the calories you eat and drink are less than the calories you burn.
- Gaining weight—In general, you will gain weight when the calories you eat and drink are greater than the calories you burn. It's important to choose foods that contain vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other healthful nutrients within your calorie allowance. The most nutritious or nutrient-dense foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry – all with little or no saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

Dairy

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. To reduce intake of saturated fat, most Dairy Group choices should be fat-free or low-fat. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, are part of the group. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the group.

Consuming dairy products as part of a healthy eating pattern provides health benefits—especially improved bone health. Foods in the Dairy Group provide nutrients that are vital for health and maintenance of your body. These nutrients include calcium, potassium, vitamin D and protein.

Dietary Fats

Dietary fats are found in both plant and animal foods. They supply calories and help with the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Some also are good sources of two essential fatty acids—linoleic acid and α -linolenic acid.

All dietary fats are composed of a mix of unsaturated (polyunsaturated, monounsaturated) and saturated fats, in varied proportions. For example, most of the fats in butter are saturated, but it also contains some unsaturated fats. Oils are mostly unsaturated fats, though they have small amounts of saturated fats.

- Unsaturated fats (polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats): Unsaturated fats typically come from plant sources such as olives, nuts or seeds—but unsaturated fat is also present in fish.
- Saturated fats: Saturated fats are most often found in animal products such as beef, pork and chicken. Leaner animal products, such as chicken breast or pork loin, often have less saturated fat. Foods that contain more saturated fat are usually solid at room temperature and are sometimes called “solid” fat. A few food products such as coconut oil, palm oils, or whole milk remain as liquids at room temperature but are high in saturated fat.
- Trans fats: Trans fats can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. They are often listed as “partially hydrogenated oils” in ingredient lists. They can be found in products such as cakes, cookies, crackers, icings, margarines, and microwave popcorn. They can also be found naturally in small amounts in some animal products such as meat, whole milk, and milk products.

Replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats can reduce your risk of heart disease and improve “good” (HDL) cholesterol levels. Replace foods high in saturated fat such as butter and baked goods with foods higher in unsaturated fat found in plants and fish, such as vegetable oils, avocado and tuna fish.

Food Groups

The five food groups are Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods and Dairy. For more information about each food group, visit <http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov>.

Fruits

Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried, and may be whole, cut-up or pureed.

Although fruit juice can be part of a healthy eating pattern, it is lower than whole fruit in dietary fiber and when consumed in excess can contribute extra calories. Therefore, at least half of the recommended amount of fruit should come from whole fruit.

Eating fruit as part of an overall healthy eating pattern provides health benefits—people who eat more fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Fruits provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body. These nutrients include potassium, dietary fiber and vitamin C.

Grains

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, or another cereal grain is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits are examples of grain products.

Grains are divided into two subgroups, whole grains and refined grains. Make half your grains whole grains.

Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ and endosperm. Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grains a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron and many B vitamins. Most refined grains are enriched. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Some food products are made from mixtures of whole grains and refined grains. The ingredients list can help you see the whole grains that are in a food product. Look for the words “whole” or “whole grain.” Products with more whole grains will have these terms at the beginning of the ingredients list.

Eating grains, especially whole grains, as part of an overall healthy eating pattern provides health benefits. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Grains provide many nutrients that are vital for the health and maintenance of our bodies. Whole grains are a source of nutrients, such as dietary fiber, iron, zinc, manganese, folate, magnesium, copper, thiamin, niacin, vitamin B6, phosphorus, selenium, riboflavin and vitamin A.

MyPlate

MyPlate is a visual tool designed to remind Americans to eat healthfully. It illustrates the five food groups using a familiar mealtime image - a place setting. Everything you eat and drink matters. The right mix can help you be healthier now and in the future. This means:

- Focus on variety, amount and nutrition.
- Choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium and added sugars.
- Start with small changes to build healthier eating styles.
- Support healthy eating for everyone.

Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our stage of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate offers ideas and tips to help you create a healthier eating style that meets your individual needs and improves your health. Find more information at <http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov>.

Nutrients

Nutrients are vitamins, minerals and other substances within food that promote health and well-being.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is any form of exercise or movement of the body that uses energy. Physical activity increases calorie needs, so those who are more physically active need more total calories.

To get the health benefits of physical activity, include activities that make you breathe harder and make your heart beat faster. These aerobic activities include things like brisk walking, running, dancing, swimming and playing basketball. Also, include strengthening activities to make your muscles stronger, like push-ups and lifting weights. Some activity is better than none. The more you do, the greater the health benefits and the better you'll feel!

Protein Foods

All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, and nuts and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Select a variety of protein foods to improve nutrient intake. Meat and poultry choices should be lean (e.g., 93% lean ground beef, sirloin, chicken breast with the skin removed, etc.) Nuts and seeds should be unsalted. Vegetarian options in the Protein Foods Group include beans and peas, processed soy products and nuts and seeds.

Eating protein foods as part of an overall healthy eating pattern provides health benefits. Protein foods are important sources of nutrients in addition to protein, including B vitamins (e.g., niacin, vitamin B12, vitamin B6, and riboflavin), selenium, choline, phosphorus, zinc, copper, vitamin D, and vitamin E. Nutrients provided by various types of protein foods differ. For example, meats provide the most zinc, while poultry provides the most niacin. Meats, poultry, and seafood provide heme iron, which is more bioavailable than the non-heme iron found in plant sources. Heme iron is especially important for young children and women who are capable of becoming pregnant or who are pregnant. Seafood provides the most vitamin B12 and vitamin D, in addition to polyunsaturated omega-3 fatty acids. Eggs provide the most choline, and nuts and seeds provide the most vitamin E. Soy products are a source of copper, manganese, and iron, as are legumes.

Seafood

Seafood contains a range of nutrients, notably the omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Eating about 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood contributes to the prevention of heart disease. Smaller amounts of seafood are recommended for young children.

Seafood varieties that are commonly consumed in the United States that are higher in EPA and DHA and lower in mercury include salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel (not king mackerel, which is high in mercury). The health benefits from consuming seafood outweigh the health risk associated with mercury, a heavy metal found in seafood in varying levels.

Sodium

Sodium is found in salt and many processed foods. Sodium is an essential nutrient but is needed by the body in relatively small quantities. Virtually all Americans eat too much sodium and should reduce the amount they eat. On average, as sodium intake increases, so does blood pressure. And on average, as sodium intake decreases, so does blood pressure. Most sodium in the diet comes from salt added during food processing. The problem of excess sodium is due to both high-sodium foods and frequent consumption of foods that contain lower amounts of sodium such as yeast breads.

Please note that for many grain, bean, vegetable, and meat products in the SuperTracker database, sodium is assumed to be added during cooking. As a result, the sodium values listed for these foods may be higher than the amount in the version you prepare if you do not add salt. If you do not add salt when preparing these food items, choose the “no salt added” version when available, or use SuperTracker's My Foods feature to create your own version with a modified level of sodium.

Vegetables

Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the Vegetable Group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.

Based on their nutrient content, vegetables are organized into five subgroups: dark-green vegetables, starchy vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, and other vegetables. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the Vegetable Group.

Eating vegetables as part of an overall healthy eating pattern provides health benefits—people who eat more vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Vegetables provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body, including potassium, dietary fiber, folate (folic acid), vitamin A and vitamin C.