

# PLANT-BASED FOODS

Eating more plant-based foods may help you lower your blood pressure, maintain a healthy body weight, and improve your heart health. These are foods that come from various plants, including **vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, seeds, and nuts**. For the greatest benefits, eat a wide variety of the plant-based foods described in this handout.

## Fruits and Vegetables

Aim to eat at least 4½ cups of fruits and vegetables every day. Different colored fruits and vegetables contain different nutrients, so it's best to select a full range of colorful choices.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- ▶ Include at least 1 fruit or vegetable at each meal or snack.
- ▶ Wash and cut up fruits and vegetables in advance for a quick snack or addition to a meal.
- ▶ Keep fruits and vegetables in the front of your refrigerator where you can see them. Don't hide them in the produce drawer.
- ▶ Choose fresh or plain frozen fruits and vegetables. If you eat canned products, choose low-sodium or no-salt-added vegetables, and stick to fruits canned in water or natural juices (instead of syrup).



## Whole Grains

Whole grains are packed with dietary fiber, B vitamins, and minerals such as iron, magnesium, and selenium. Aim to eat at least 3 servings of whole grains each day. (At least half of your daily grain servings should be whole grains.) 1 serving of whole grains equals ½ cup cooked whole grain pasta, wild rice, brown rice, or oatmeal; 1 slice of whole grain bread; or 3 cups of popcorn.

Here are some ways to eat more whole grains:

- ▶ Switch to 100% whole grain bread and whole wheat flour.

- ▶ Eat oatmeal or 100% whole grain cereal for a quick and easy breakfast.
- ▶ Substitute brown rice or wild rice for white rice.
- ▶ Choose whole wheat pasta.
- ▶ Explore different types of grains like quinoa, bulgur, whole grain barley, millet, and amaranth.

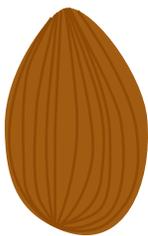


## Legumes (Beans)

1 serving of beans ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked) is packed with nutrients. Beans are rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and protein. Beans can count as vegetables or protein foods: 1 cup of cooked beans count as 1 cup of vegetables, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of cooked beans count as 1-ounces equivalent in the protein foods group.

To add more beans to your meals, try these tips:

- ▶ Include black beans, soybeans, kidney beans, chickpeas, or white beans in salads, soups, and main dishes.
- ▶ Use beans instead of some or all of the beef, chicken, and pork in your favorite recipes.
- ▶ Make a tasty soup using dried lentils or split peas, which cook faster than other dried legumes.
- ▶ Rinse canned beans to remove extra salt. You can also choose canned beans without added salt or cook with dried legumes.



## Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are full of heart-healthy fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats). They also provide dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

1 serving of nuts or seeds is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces. Examples of a serving are 12 almonds, 24 pistachios, 7 walnut halves,  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of pumpkin or sunflower seeds, or 1 Tablespoon of peanut butter or almond butter.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ▶ Enjoy a serving of unsalted nuts or seeds as a heart-healthy snack.
- ▶ Add unsalted nuts or seeds to salads or stir-fries.
- ▶ Snack on a slice of whole grain bread spread with 1 Tablespoon of nut butter.