

March 2008

# Nutrition Notes

*A Monthly Newsletter About Health and Nutrition*

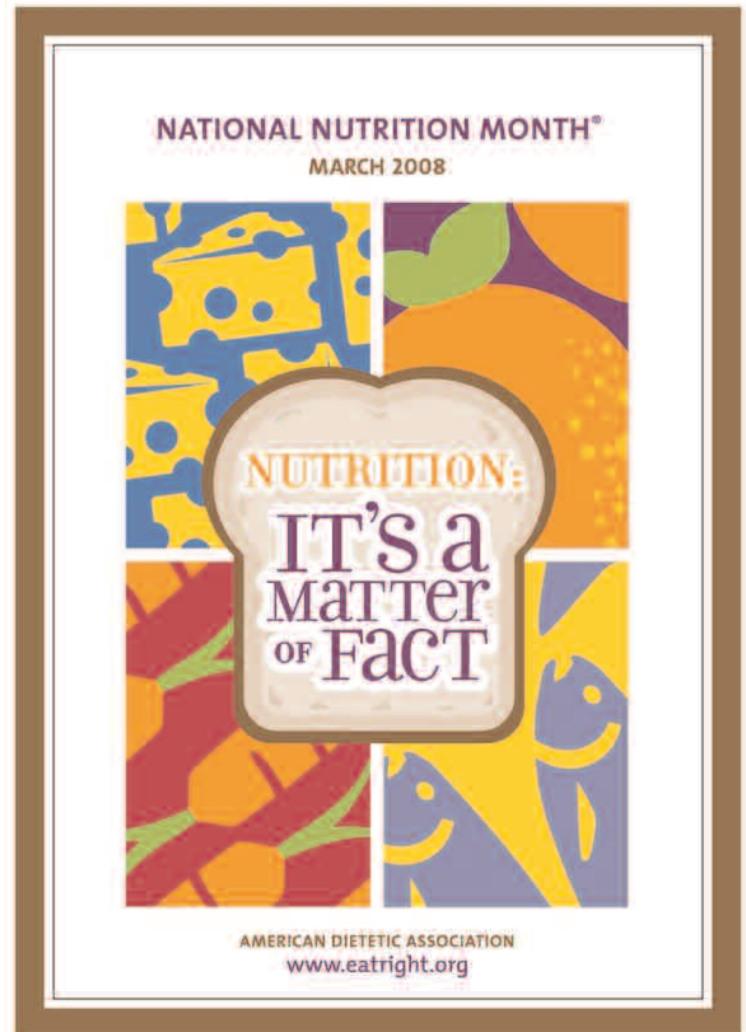


## Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact

When it comes to understanding the principles of good nutrition, it often seems like there is more fiction than fact floating around in the media. Nutrition is a science, and we nutrition experts and researchers do not arrive at facts easily. Nutrition information becomes fact only when it can be observed and validated by several different rigorously designed research studies, not when a celebrity tests out a diet in his or her own kitchen and reports the results. March is National Nutrition Month and this year's theme is Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact. The following are some important nutritional facts that I want to emphasize this National Nutrition Month:

**Fact: All fats are not "bad."** Some types of fats are important for health; it's a matter of eating them in the right balance. Minimize saturated fats and avoid trans fats and emphasize monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fats (a type of polyunsaturated fat) in your food choices. Saturated fats are found in butter, cream, whole milk and yogurt, red meat, poultry skin and cheese, while trans fats are in deep fried foods as well as many baked goods that use margarine or shortening, including cookies, cakes, crackers, breads, muffins and pies. When ingredient lists are available, read them and look for the words "partially hydrogenated oil" to help weed out trans fats. Replace unhealthy fats with health-promoting monounsaturated fats mainly from extra virgin first cold-pressed olive oil and nuts, seeds and avocados. When it comes to polyunsaturated fats, try to balance omega 3s with other polyunsaturated fats from soybean, sunflower, safflower, corn, sesame and peanut oils. Omega-3 fatty acids are mostly found in fatty fish, like salmon, anchovies, black cod and tuna, and to a lesser degree in flax seeds, canola oil and fortified foods, such as eggs. Aim to eat roughly twice as much monounsaturated fat as you do polyunsaturated and saturated fat.

**Fact: Carbohydrates should be chosen carefully.** Carbohydrates are important sources of energy and they are necessary for many of the metabolic processes that take place in our bodies, but some fuel us better than others. When choosing starches, pick whole, intact grains--like oats, barley, brown rice, wild rice and quinoa--over grains that are processed into flour to make bread, pasta, crackers, cookies and cereals. Minimally processed carbs can aid in weight and blood sugar control, while highly processed carbs can have the opposite effect. Whole grains are not always an option, especially when you are eating at a restaurant, but starchy vegetables, including corn, sweet potatoes, baby potatoes, winter squashes and peas, can stand in for grains at some meals. Try ordering one of these vegetables instead of the usual side dishes of white rice, French fries, mashed potatoes or pasta that are usually on the menu.



**Fact: Protein is an important component of each meal, but we don't need as much as we think we do.** Most of us tend to make it the center of our meals, but it should only be a small part of our plates, more of a side dish than a centerpiece. Protein is essential for health and for a healthy immune system and is also important for weight control because it helps us feel satisfied. Include some protein with each meal and snack to maximize feeling full for several hours. To minimize saturated fats and boost fiber intake, try occasionally substituting plant proteins such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, tofu and soybeans for animal proteins.

*continued...*

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- March Store Appearances

*Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact continued...*

**Fact: We need between nine and eleven servings of vegetables and fruit a day.** A diet that meets your produce goals can help lower blood pressure, cholesterol levels and weight. Eating more produce is also associated with lower risks for stroke, heart disease, type-2 diabetes, certain cancers, age-related macular degeneration and osteoporosis. Fruit and vegetables are low in calories, high in nutrients, and relatively filling due to their fiber content, so eating more of them should help you reach a healthy weight since they will displace other foods in your diet that are more caloric and less nutritious.

**Fact: Calories count.** Most people have no idea how many calories they need or consume each day. In general, adults' calorie requirements range between 1,600 and 2,400 calories, depending on their sex, body size, age and activity level. It's very simple: eating more than you require can lead to weight gain and eating less than you require can lead to weight loss. You often see 2,000 calories listed as daily reference figures, since it is considered the average calorie need for most adults. If you figure that your daily need is 2,000 calories, then you can divide your meals and snacks the following way: breakfast: 600 calories; morning snack: 100 calories; lunch: 600 calories; afternoon snack: 100 calories; dinner: 600 calories. If you are working to lose weight, you may want to try eating more calories at the beginning of the day as follows: breakfast: 700 calories; morning snack: 100 calories; lunch: 600 calories; afternoon snack: 100 calories; dinner: 500 calories. When choosing what to eat, always keep the following in mind: larger portions have more calories than smaller portions of the same food and large portions encourage you to eat more, so always try to put smaller portions on your plate to save calories and prevent weight gain.

**Fact: For balanced nutrition at lunch and dinner, your plate should be mostly vegetables and fruit.** Fill half of your plate with produce, a quarter with intact whole grains or starchy vegetables and a quarter with protein.

**Fact: Eating a certain type of fat can make you store belly fat, while eating another type can help you lose fat around your belly.**

Trans fats tell your body to store fat deep within your abdomen, which increases inflammation. Trading in trans fats for monounsaturated fats can help you lose some of that dangerous abdominal fat.

**Fact: Chronic inflammation can increase your risk of obesity, diabetes, insulin resistance, certain cancers, Alzheimer's disease, high blood pressure and heart disease.** Eating an anti-inflammatory diet (see January 2008 Nutrition Notes), combined with exercise and abstinence from smoking, can help reduce chronic inflammation and its related conditions.



## March 10, 2008 is the first ever Registered Dietitian Day!

The American Dietetic Association proudly announces the first-ever Registered Dietitian Day. As the nation's food and nutrition experts, registered dietitians are committed to improving the health of their patients and community. Registered Dietitian Day will commemorate the dedication of RDs as advocates for advancing the nutritional status of Americans and people around the world.

**Fact: Eating antioxidants in foods is more beneficial than taking them in supplement form.** Nature makes plants in unique packages that contain complex combinations of nutrients that can't be replicated in pills. Furthermore, separating these naturally occurring ingredients from one another may decrease or eliminate their health benefits. To reap the benefits of antioxidants in your diet, eat a rainbow of colorful foods, especially plant foods.

**Fact: You don't need to drink eight glasses of water a day, but if you're not meeting your fluid needs with water, what are you drinking instead?**

Water should be your top beverage choice since it makes up about 50-75% of our body weight. Unsweetened white, green, black or red tea can be a healthy alternative to water, as can a cup of unsweetened 100% fruit juice, nonfat milk or soy milk a day. Soft drinks, both diet and regular, should be eliminated from

**Fill half of your plate with produce, a quarter with intact whole grains or starchy vegetables and a quarter with protein.**

your regular diet since they are associated with metabolic syndrome and weak bones.

March is National Nutrition Month, but it's important to have good nutrition in mind all year 'round. We eat every day, so you need to know your nutrition facts in order to make healthy choices at most of your meals. The more you know about nutrition, the more you can practice healthful eating. The better you eat, the healthier you will be—and that's a fact!

*Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.*

# Eating Healthfully When You're in a Hurry

Let's face it: we're all in a rush, especially when it comes to cooking and eating. Many of us turn to restaurants, takeout, service delis and fast food to eliminate altogether the extra step of cooking. If we do cook, we want convenient foods that cook quickly (or not at all) and can be ready to eat in no time. The problem is that we often trade in health for convenience because it seems that we can't have both.

To a certain degree, it is true that healthful food can't also be convenient because healthy meals include loads of produce, which takes time to wash and prepare before cooking. Also, eating healthfully in general means preparing your own food since you control what goes into your food—both in quantity and in quality—and that takes time. However, there are tricks and strategies that you can employ so that you can make nutritious meals in a hurry without relying on a restaurant or factory to make them for you. I've developed six steps that you can take to get a home-cooked healthful meal on the table in a hurry any night of the week:

**1. Plan, plan, plan.** I can't emphasize enough how much time this could save you. When you have some down time, plan your meals for the next several days. If you start thinking about what to make for dinner at 5pm, then shop, and then cook, you won't be eating until 8pm. Being impulsive is fun, but washing dishes at 9pm is not. You will save more time if you plan your menus and shop for all of them at once.

**2. As soon as you have your menus planned,** take a quick inventory of what you have on hand in your fridge and pantry to see if anything has expired or needs to be replaced. Nothing wastes more time than running back to the market after coming home, only to learn that you're out of a spice or that the salad dressing you were going to use is expired.

**3. Choose recipes that build on each other.** By planning a week's worth of meals at once and taking inventory, you can choose recipes that build on ingredients that you already have on hand. For instance, if you use half of an onion on Monday, then try to include another recipe later in the week that will use the other half of the onion. You can take it one step further by slicing or chopping the whole onion on Monday so it won't have to be prepared later on in the week. You may also plan to have left-overs, but keep in mind that cooking large quantities of food takes longer than cooking small batches, so you must decide which has more benefits for you.

**4. Organize your shopping list.** Once you know what you plan to cook, make a shopping list and try to group the items you need according to aisle or department. List all of your produce items together and all of your canned goods together, for instance, so that you will not waste time criss-crossing the store for items that you might have missed because your list was jumbled up.

**5. Become a strategic shopper.** Choosing the right ingredients at the supermarket is a huge part of combining health and convenience. Here are some strategies:

- In the produce department, consider buying pre-cut vegetables and fruit and bulk or bagged lettuce. Everything should still be washed at home, but at least it won't need to be cut, too. Also, choose ripe vegetables and fruit to help save time, since they will cook faster and have more flavor than less ripe produce.

- In the meat and seafood departments, select cuts that cook quickly. The smaller or thinner the pieces of protein, the faster they will cook. Boneless poultry will cook faster than pieces with bones. Also consider having a meat cutter at your Gelson's completely butterfly chicken breasts to make them thinner (this is faster than pounding them). Shrimp and scallops cook in minutes since they are small.

- Consider trying meatless proteins that don't need to be cooked, such as tofu and canned beans. Heating food takes a lot less time than cooking it, so these can be a good option for "mix and heat" type meals.

- Put on a sweater, open up the freezer case and say "hello" to your new best friends: pre-cut frozen unseasoned vegetables and fruit. Don't think they are necessarily inferior to fresh produce, because they usually are not. They are often frozen near the farms where they were grown, so they are picked when they are ripest and frozen within a day or two, before they start to lose nutrients. Mixed frozen vegetables are a great way to add variety to your meals, especially in the winter when few plant foods are in season. Be sure to read the ingredients to make sure that all you are getting is produce, though, without any salt, sugar or preservatives.

- Some canned foods make fantastically nutritious convenience foods. Buy low sodium beans, tomatoes and broths, and canned tuna, salmon and sardines to keep in your pantry at all times.

**6. Recruit home-grown help in the kitchen.** If you live with other people, including children, ask them to help out in the kitchen. It could be something as easy as setting the table, filling water glasses, or stirring the soup, but it will allow you to concentrate on the more complicated parts of cooking.

I don't expect you to whip up meals from scratch using all fresh ingredients on a nightly basis, but I do think that these are a few tricks that you could try that would make your meals healthier and easier when you are in a hurry. Each part of your meal doesn't need to be homemade, but some part of it should. I often heat canned *Wolfgang Puck* organic minestrone soup and serve it with fish and vegetables that I cook myself and I still feel good about what I am serving my family. Your time is precious, but there are few things more worthwhile than preparing a healthful meal for the ones you love.

## Staples for Meals in Minutes:

Extra virgin first cold pressed organic olive oil  
Assorted varieties of vinegars  
Salt, black pepper, assorted dried spices and herbs  
Reduced sodium soy sauce  
Canned low sodium beans, tomatoes, tomato sauce  
Canned tuna, salmon, sardines  
Dried fruits, tomatoes  
Raw unsalted nuts  
Low-sodium chicken and vegetable broths  
Onions, garlic, shallots  
Eggs  
Brown rice, wild rice, barley, quinoa, whole-wheat pasta, polenta rolls  
Frozen pre-cut unseasoned vegetables and unsweetened fruit  
Olive oil- and canola oil-based salad dressings

**Food  
of the  
Month**

# Pulses

Most people have never heard of a pulse in its food-related context, but in addition to the number of times your heart beats in a minute, it is also the name we use to describe the dried seed of a legume (which group includes foods you're probably more familiar with – beans, lentils and peas). Legumes are pods that split open when ripe to reveal their seeds. Many legumes, like green peas and fava beans, can be eaten fresh, but I want to focus on the varieties of dried pulses that are most common, such as kidney, black, pinto, white and garbanzo beans, as well as lentils and split peas.

Make all the jokes you want about beans being the “musical fruit,” but be warned: beans are seriously healthful. Dried beans are the best source of antioxidants in our diet, with red beans offering more antioxidants than wild blueberries! In fact, in a recent ranking of the best sources of food antioxidants, the top five foods were (1) small red beans (dried), (2) wild blueberries, (3) red kidney beans (dried), (4) pinto beans and (5) cultivated blueberries. Their impressive antioxidant scores translate to big health benefits to us. Pulses contain compounds that can help protect against breast and colon cancers, lower blood cholesterol and blood pressure, control blood sugar, and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Actually, only part of the health benefits provided by pulses come from antioxidants; a lot also comes from their fiber content. Pulses are high in soluble fiber, which can help to significantly reduce cholesterol levels. Their insoluble fiber can aid in the prevention of colon cancer and promote regular bowel function. The total fiber content is great for diabetics and others who wish to control their blood sugar, since beans cause a slow, steady rise in blood sugar rather than a quick spike and drop, like some other carbohydrate-containing foods. A half cup of cooked

beans supplies anywhere from 5 to 8 grams of dietary fiber. An important way that pulses protect against heart disease in general is by acting as a protein substitute for fatty animal proteins, like beef and pork. They contain no saturated fat, but have up to double the amount of iron and a lot more fiber than steak.

At Gelson's, pulses are available in dry, canned, and cooked forms. Some of the most common types include pinto, black, kidney, cannellini, navy, garbanzo, butter and great northern beans, lentils, split peas, black-eyed peas, peanuts, and soybeans. Most dry beans need to be soaked for several hours before cooking, but lentils and split peas do not. Canned beans are a very convenient alternative to dry beans, but try to buy reduced-sodium varieties and then rinse them in a colander to remove 30-40% more salt. Look for cooked lentils in our produce department and cooked soy beans in the freezer case. When buying dried beans, you want them to be of uniform size and shiny color to ensure freshness and even cooking. To prepare dried beans, spread them on a pan or towel and pick out any stones or debris, transfer them to a colander and rinse under cold running water. Most beans, except lentils and split peas, require soaking. You can do this overnight or, to reduce soaking time to about an hour or two, boil water in a large pot and add the cleaned beans so that the water covers the beans by two inches, then cover the pot and allow the beans to double in size. Discard the soaking water and then follow the cooking directions in whatever recipe you are using. It's important to throw out the soaking water before you cook, since many of the gas-



forming compounds get leached into that liquid. To further reduce flatulence, try eating just ½-cup of pulses at a time and avoid serving other gas-forming foods, such as cabbage-family vegetables, at the same meal. Chew ½ teaspoon of fennel or coriander seeds after meals or try an over-the-counter gas reliever before a bean meal to prevent gas. Use legumes in soups, chili, stews, dips, salads, vegetable patties, burritos, and side dishes. This month, try my recipes for Roasted Garbanzo Snacks and Red Bean Tagine.

## Jessica's March Store Appearances: Body Fat Testing\*

Jessica will be offering complimentary body fat testing and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

**Newport Beach**  
Wednesday March 5, 3:30 pm  
**Pasadena**  
Monday March 24, Noon  
**Silver Lake/Los Feliz**  
Monday March 24, 4:30 pm

**Marina del Rey**  
Tuesday March 25, 5:00 pm  
**Encino**  
Thursday March 27, Noon  
**Sherman Oaks**  
Thursday March 27, 4:00 pm

**Century City**  
Friday March 28, Noon  
**Westlake Village**  
Monday March 31, Noon  
**Calabasas**  
Monday March 31, 3:30 pm

\*Testing method is Bioelectrical Impedance and is not appropriate for people with pacemakers or osteoporosis, pregnant women or children. Be well-hydrated for most accurate results.

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DANA POINT 949-488-8147	MARINA DEL REY 310-306-2952	PACIFIC PALISADES 310-459-4483	SHERMAN OAKS 818-377-4140	VALLEY VILLAGE / NORTH HOLLYWOOD 818-906-5743	MAYFAIR HOLLYWOOD 323-464-7316

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