

Eat This, Not That

Nutritionists and wellness experts offer tips on healthy eating options

BY STACEY ZABLE

UNDERSTANDING WHAT FOODS to eat — and why — can help you on the road to healthier eating habits. Keep these expert tips in mind the next time you shop and while planning your meals for the holiday season and upcoming new year:



KEEP IT WHOLE AND PLANT-BASED

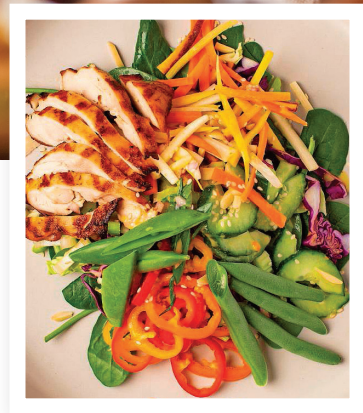
“As much as possible, aim for real, whole-food options,” says Jennifer Keirstead, a registered holistic nutritionist at Mountain Trek Health Reset Retreat in Ainsworth Hot Springs, British Columbia. “Whole foods tend to be nutrient-dense, which means they are filled with easily absorbed vitamins and minerals as well as fiber. Another benefit is that these foods don’t contain refined sugar and sodium, or unhealthy trans fats,” she says. These include foods without ingredient lists and packaging, Keirstead explains. Good examples of whole foods are fresh fruits and vegetables, bulk whole grains such as steel cut oats and buckwheat, eggs, organic and grass-fed meat and legumes, such as chickpeas and black beans. >



“Eating more fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, peas, lentils and nuts can lower the risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers,” says Dawn Menning, a registered dietitian and program director for digital health at Nutu App, a science-based prediabetes prevention app. “Try to fill up your plate with more plant-based foods to get all the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants they provide,” she says.

FILL UP ON FIBER

“High-fiber foods will help stabilize blood sugar levels, fill you up and aid metabolism as well as nourish the gut microbiome,” says Talia Segal Fidler, a holistic nutritionist at The Lodge at Woodloch in Hawley, Pa. She lists berries, broccoli, ginger, cabbage, bell peppers, asparagus and leafy greens as examples of foods high in fiber.



MINDFUL EATING

Our lives are busy, but your first step to healthier eating habits is to make your food intake a priority. “Take time to enjoy your meals without distractions,” says Talia Segal Fidler, a holistic nutritionist at The Lodge at Woodloch in Hawley, Pa. “That means putting your phone away while you eat, chew the food and savor each bite and control your portions. Pay attention to your hunger and fullness signals, and do not eat out of boredom or stress. Stay well-hydrated, as often we think that we are hungry yet we are (actually) thirsty.”

Menning suggests you read food labels for fiber content. “If it provides at least 20 percent of the daily value per serving, it’s considered high-fiber,” she says. Fidler adds that when increasing

fiber in the diet, “it’s important to add it gradually and drink plenty of fluids.”

DON'T FORGET HEALTHY FATS

Eat healthy fats to improve heart health, brain health and overall health. Fidler recommends olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds and fatty fish such as sardines, anchovies, mackerel and salmon. “Healthy fats and protein will keep us (feeling) full and stabilize blood sugar levels,” she says.

YES OR NO TO VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS?

“(Consult) with a health care provider before starting supplements,” Fidler says. “They should never replace a balanced diet. Often a blood test can tell you your personal deficiency and indicate the need for certain supplements, for example vitamin D or B (or iron,” she says. ■