

Fight Disease With Whole-Food, Plant-Based Eating

A whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) diet is an eating plan rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds. Research shows that following a WFPB diet can prevent and treat illnesses such as heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. It is no wonder why many people are choosing this nutrient-rich eating plan for better health.

How It Works

Eat whole foods

Sticking to a WFPB diet requires that you eat mostly whole foods or minimally processed foods (see sidebar). This means you will avoid highly processed foods even if they are labeled as organic, natural, whole-grain, vegan or vegetarian.

Whole foods are foods that 1) are in their natural form, altered as little as possible once harvested; 2) are not processed or refined; and 3) do not have added ingredients such as starches, sugars, sodium, flavorings, colors, preservatives and fats.

For example, a whole food is an apple. However, applesauce and apple juice are not whole foods, because they are processed. This is true even if they are labeled as organic or have no added sugars.

Eat plant-based foods

You will eat mostly plant-based whole foods including fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds. For your fruits and vegetables, try to eat what is in season and locally available. Choose a variety of colors. Beans and lentils will be your main source of protein. Eat nuts and seeds in smaller amounts.

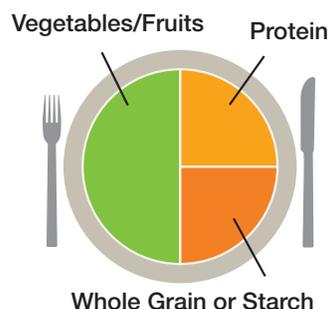
Leave out or limit animal products

Animal products include dairy, meat, poultry, fish and eggs. Some people who follow a WFPB diet avoid animal products; others eat a limited amount. If you do eat animal products, they should be close to their natural form.

To get the best health benefits from the WFPB diet, avoid all animal products. If you choose to leave out animal products, talk to your healthcare team about taking a B12 supplement.

Rethink your plate

When you follow any diet, it is important to eat a variety of foods in the right amounts. To help you eat the right amounts, follow this simple rule: fill 1/2 your plate with vegetables and fruit, 1/4 with a healthy protein (such as beans or lentils), and 1/4 with a whole grain or starchy vegetable (such as brown rice or a sweet potato).



Sutter Resources

To find out more about nutrition, go to sutterhealth.org/health/nutrition.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral to a registered dietitian. Some dietitians are trained in whole-food, plant-based nutrition.

You may find local resources by going to sutterhealth.org/classes-events and selecting the topics “Heart Health” and “Nutrition.”

What Are Processed Foods?

Processed foods are generally any packaged food with a nutrition label. Many are high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar. Some processed foods are better than others. Packaged baby carrots or unsalted nuts are minimally-processed, nutritious snacks.

Getting Started

Keep it simple when making changes. Cut out or reduce one animal product or processed food at a time. Slowly increase your plants and whole foods to “crowd out” other foods on your plate. Use this chart to know what foods to choose often and those to avoid.

	Whole Foods <i>Best Choice</i>	Minimally Processed <i>Good Choice</i>	Highly Processed <i>Don't Choose</i>
Vegetables	Starchy vegetables (corn, peas, potatoes, yams) and non-starchy vegetables (kale, broccoli, carrots, peppers, tomatoes).	Packaged fresh vegetables. Canned or frozen vegetables without added sodium (salt), sugar or sauce.	Packaged snacks. Sauces, condiments and soups. Juice. Deep-fried vegetables.
Fruits	Whole fruits.	Packaged fresh fruit. Canned or frozen fruit without added sodium, sugar or sauce. Dried fruit without added sugar.	Packaged snacks. Dried fruit with sugar. Jelly or jam. Juice.
Legumes	Dry beans, lentils and split peas.	Canned beans without added sodium or sauce. Tempeh, tofu, seitan or hummus.	Packaged snacks. Canned soup, beans or lentils with sauce.
Nuts and Seeds	Unsalted almonds, pecans cashews, walnuts. Unsalted sunflower, pumpkin, or sesame seeds. Limit to a small handful per day.	Unsalted nut butters without added sugars or oils.	Flavored nuts. Nut butters with salt, sugar or added oils and flavors.
Whole Grains	Brown rice, wild rice, bulgur, barley, farro, quinoa, rolled oats.	Homemade plain popcorn. Whole-wheat pasta, bread or tortillas. Shredded wheat cereal.	Packaged snacks or baked goods—even if they are whole grain. White rice, pasta or bread. Cereal and sweetened oatmeal.
Fats	Avocados, coconut, olives, chia and flax seeds. Use fats in limited amounts.		Oils of any kind (includes but not limited to olive, coconut, avocado or canola oils). Vegetable-based butter alternatives.

Additional Resources

- plantricianproject.org
The Plantrician Project
- pcrm.org/good-nutrition/plant-based-diets
The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine