



Extension FactSheet

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Modifying a Recipe to be Healthier

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The USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans emphasizes we need to reduce the amount of fat, sodium (salt) and added sugar we consume and increase our consumption of fiber. When buying food we can check the label, but when using a recipe we may need to make some changes by substituting ingredients or changing the cooking technique. Just like you substitute when you are out of a certain ingredient, you can make changes in a recipe so it is healthier.

This fact sheet provides you with ways to decrease the amount of fat, calories, sugar and salt (sodium) in your recipes. Ways to increase the fiber in your recipes is provided to help you make more nutritious food. Remember you can experiment with recipes and change ingredients. You may also be able to find other recipes that are similar to yours that have less fat, sugar, salt, and have more additions of nutritious ingredients. Have fun when you are cooking: Experiment!

Tips to decrease the total fat and lower calories

Instead of this:

Try using this:

Shortening, butter, margarine, or solid fat.	Use $\frac{1}{4}$ less liquid oil or solid fat called for in the recipe. If recipe calls for 1 cup use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. If recipe uses $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shortening, use 3 Tablespoons oil. Use equal amounts of oil for melted shortening, margarine or butter.
Shortening, butter, or oil in baking	Use applesauce or prune puree for half of the butter, shortening or oil. May need to reduce baking time by 25%.
Instead of whole milk, half and half or evaporated milk	Use skim milk, Skim Plus™, 1% milk, evaporated skim milk, fat-free half and half, or plain soymilk with calcium.
Butter, shortening, margarine, or oil to prevent sticking. Fat to sauté or stir-fry.	When frying foods use cooking spray, water, broth or nonstick pans.
Full-fat cream cheese	Use low-fat or nonfat cream cheese, Neufchatel or low-fat cottage cheese pureed until smooth.
Full-fat sour cream Full-fat cottage cheese Full-fat Ricotta cheese	Use nonfat or reduced fat sour cream or fat-free plain yogurt. (Yogurt is not heat stable.) Use 2% or fat-free cottage cheese. Use part-skim ricotta.
Cream Whipping cream	Use evaporated skim milk Use nonfat whipped topping or cream (This is only nonfat if one serving size is used.)
Eggs	Use egg whites (usually 2 egg whites for every egg) or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup egg substitute.
Whole fat cheese	Use reduced fat cheese, but add it at the end of the baking time or use part skim mozzarella.
Frying in fat	Use cooking methods such as bake, boil, broil, grill, poach, roast, stir-fry, or microwave.
Regular mayonnaise or salad dressing	Use low fat, reduced or nonfat mayonnaise or salad dressing.
Canned fish	Use water-packed canned products or canned products packed in 'lite' syrup.
Fatter cuts of meat—skin on	Leaner cuts of meat or ground meat, remove skin before cooking.

Tips to reduce sodium:**Instead of this: Try using this:**

Salt	Omit salt or reduce salt by ½ in most recipes (except in products with yeast). Cook foods without adding salt. Don't put the salt shaker on the table.
Frozen or canned vegetables	Choose frozen vegetables without sauces or use no-salt-added canned goods. Rinsing canned vegetables will help reduce sodium.
Seasoning Salt or spice mixes with salt	Use salt-free seasonings and spice mixes. Use herbs, spices, lemon juice, or vinegar to flavor food instead of salt. Seasonings high in sodium include catsup, chili sauce, chili powder, bouillon cubes, barbecue sauce, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and meat tenderizers.

Tips to reduce the amount of sugar:**Instead of this: Try using this:**

Sugar	Reducing sugar by ¼ to 1/3 in baked goods and desserts. If recipe calls for 1 cup, use 2/3 cup. Cinnamon, vanilla, and almond extract can be added to give impression of sweetness. (Do not remove all sugar in yeast breads as sugar provides food for the yeast.)
Sugar	Replacing sugar with amounts of sucralose (*Splenda™), works well for most baked products. Add ½ teaspoon baking soda in addition to each cup of Splenda™ used. Baking time is usually shorter and product will have a smaller yield. Try using aspartame (*NutraSweet™), saccharin, or acesulfame potassium in other products that are not baked. The sweet taste will vary with product combination or amounts of each sweetener used.
Fruit-flavored yogurt	Plain yogurt with fresh fruit slices or use light versions of yogurt.
Syrup	Pureed fruit, such as no sugar added applesauce, or sugar-free syrup
Sugar in canned or frozen fruits	Decrease or eliminate sugar when canning or freezing fruits or buy unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit canned in its own juice, water, or light syrup.

Ways to increase Fiber:**Instead of: Try using this:**

White rice, enriched grains	Whole grain, brown rice, wild rice, whole cornmeal (not degermed), whole barley, bulgur, kasha, quinoa, or whole wheat couscous.
All purpose flour	Substitute whole wheat flour for up to ½ of the flour. For example, if a recipe calls for 2 cups flour, try 1 cup all purpose flour and 1 cup minus 1 tablespoon whole wheat flour. Use “white whole-wheat flour” or “whole wheat pastry flour” for total amount of all-purpose flour.
Pastas, crackers, cookies, cereals	Whole grain pastas, crackers, cookies, and cereals.
White bread	100% whole wheat bread and 100% whole grain bread.
Iceberg lettuce	Romaine lettuce, endive, and other leafy lettuces, or baby spinach.
Meat	Use more dried beans and peas. Add legumes and lentils to many different dishes: try adding lentils to your spaghetti sauce.
Peeled fruit and vegetables	Add extra fruits and vegetables, such as adding carrots to spaghetti sauce, leaving apple peels in apple crisp, zucchini bread, etc. Add extra fruits and vegetables to recipes and include the peel when appropriate.

* Use of brand name does not mean an endorsement of the product.

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