



EASY (DELICIOUS!) WAYS TO EAT HEALTHY

Packing more nutrition into your meals *doesn't* require a diet overhaul—just some small swaps and add-ins that can pay off big over time. Ready to look and feel better? Then start right here.

By Karen Ansel, R.D.N. Photographs by Claire Benoist

BUILD A LEANER BODY

1 Simmer oatmeal in milk, not water. Boiling $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oats in 1 cup milk adds 6 to 8 grams of satiating protein to keep hunger at bay all morning. That more than makes up for the small increase in calories, says Cheryl Forberg, R.D., chef and nutritionist for *The Biggest Loser*.

2 Cook pasta so it's truly al dente. Pasta that's drained while it still has a real bite has a lower glycemic index than fully cooked noodles. That means the carbs are released into your bloodstream more slowly, so you stay satisfied longer, says Jennie Brand-Miller, Ph.D., coauthor of *The Low GI Handbook: The New Glucose Revolution Guide to the Long-Term Health Benefits of Low GI Eating*.

3 Make popcorn nice and spicy. Instead of using butter, top your air-popped popcorn with Sriracha or cayenne powder, suggest SELF contributing experts Stephanie Clarke, R.D., and Willow Jarosh, R.D. These fiery seasonings contain capsaicin, a compound that can kill cravings, an *Appetite* study says.

4 Spread part-skim ricotta on your bagel in place of cream cheese. It racks up double the whey protein, which helps build muscle and burn fat, according to a University of Tennessee study.

5 Eat slightly green bananas. “Before they ripen, bananas contain resistant starch, a type of fiber that isn't fully broken down during digestion. This helps make you feel full, so you're less likely to overeat,” says Jill Weisenberger, R.D.N.

GET MORE GORGEOUS

- 6 Order tacos with beans.** Each cup of black or pinto beans delivers a hefty amount of potassium, a mineral that depuffs your eyes and reduces water retention, Clarke and Jarosh say.
- 7 Stir a teaspoon of unsweetened cocoa powder** into your coffee for a shot of flavonoids—antioxidants that increase blood flow to your skin and can help you score a rosier complexion.
- 8 Trade in your dippers.** Swap pita chips for red pepper strips to dip into hummus or baba ghanoush. Just one red bell pepper packs plenty of vitamin C, which is crucial for your body to produce skin-firming, sag-fighting collagen, Clarke and Jarosh say.
- 9 Blend a tablespoon of chia seeds** or ground flaxseed into your smoothie, and you'll get close to a day's supply of alpha-linolenic acid, an omega-3 fat that gives you glowing skin, the Institute of Medicine reports.
- 10 Eat cheese for dessert.** Because of aged cheese's ability to raise the pH level in your mouth, a cube or two of cheddar, Swiss or Parmesan can brighten your smile, Clarke and Jarosh say. Cheese can reduce the risk for cavities and the erosion of tooth enamel—and you might notice a little whitening action, too.

STAY HEALTHY

- 11 Mince or crush fresh garlic** and let it sit for 10 minutes before cooking with it. A study in *Nutrition and Cancer* reports that allicin, a cancer-fighting compound in garlic, becomes more potent after garlic's cell walls are broken apart; it takes about 10 minutes for that potency to fully develop, Weisenberger says.
- 12 Switch from tuna to salmon** when you order sushi. That small swap delivers 11 times more cardio-enhancing omega-3 fats per serving, Clarke and Jarosh say.
- 13 Sprinkle sesame seeds onto your salad** for a crunchy upgrade of bone-building calcium. Kick up the nutty flavor by toasting them in a skillet for a few minutes.
- 14 Whip lowfat plain kefir** with fruit for an easy nutrient-packed breakfast. This tangy dairy drink has loads of protein, plus health-promoting probiotic strains, Clarke and Jarosh say.
- 15 Cook grains in tea.** To add an antioxidant boost, swap half the water needed to make whole grains for unsweetened green tea, says Jackie Newgent, R.D.N., author of *The With or Without Meat Cookbook*. Or toss a tea bag in boiling water, steep for two minutes, remove, then add grains.
- 16 Make your omelet with whole eggs.** The yolks contain most of the nutrients, such as choline, a B vitamin that sharpens your memory, Clarke and Jarosh say.

FIRE UP ENERGY

- 17 Replace croutons with roasted chickpeas.** Croutons are packed with simple carbs, while chickpeas supply high-fiber complex carbs and protein for energy and alertness, Clarke and Jarosh say. Buy them roasted or DIY: Pat rinsed canned chickpeas dry, toss with olive oil, salt and pepper, then bake on a cookie sheet at 400° for 30 to 40 minutes.
- 18 Throw half a cup of whole grains,** like barley, quinoa or farro, into your stir-fry. These fiber-rich grains encourage the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter linked to a sunnier mood, explain Clarke and Jarosh. They also offer sustained energy to keep you fueled.
- 19 Add orange slices to spinach or kale salad,** and you'll soak up more of the energy-cranking iron already present in those leafy greens. The high vitamin C content in oranges helps convert plant iron to a form that's easier for your body to absorb, research from Oregon State University suggests.
- 20 Top your pancakes with peanut butter** and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup strawberries instead of traditional butter and syrup. Two tablespoons of peanut butter add B vitamins that help you turn food into energy, Clarke and Jarosh say; the protein and fat combo keeps your energy up for hours.

BOOST IMMUNITY

- 21 Toss a couple of chopped Brazil nuts** into your granola. They're superhero sources of selenium, a mineral that helps your body make infection-fighting cells known as cytokines. Just two regular-sized nuts deliver your recommended daily dose, Clarke and Jarosh say.
- 22 Instead of mayo in your sandwich,** spread on a mixture of lowfat yogurt and fresh chopped herbs, such as basil or rosemary, Newgent suggests. These herbs contain anti-inflammatory, infection-fighting compounds, and yogurt offers probiotics that can give your immune system a boost. Both regular and Greek yogurt offer the same probiotics count, but the Greek kind spreads better.
- 23 Season a dish with citrus zest,** Newgent says. Not only does the zest boast antimicrobial properties that help kill or prevent bacterial growth on food, but it also adds a nutritional punch of vitamin C and antioxidant flavonoids that have anti-inflammatory abilities.
- 24 Roast, grill or sauté your tomatoes** instead of eating them raw. A study from the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* shows that cooking them jacks up levels of disease-fighting phytochemicals, such as lycopene, that your body can absorb.
- 25 Add avocado to your smoothie.** Avocado has disease-fighting antioxidants and healthy monounsaturated fats, which help your body absorb immune-boosting vitamins, Clarke and Jarosh say.