

FOODS TO AVOID

tips

We need to avoid certain foods for a variety of reasons.

1. They displace more nutritious foods from our diet
2. They promote illness/inflammation
3. They deter from our health or weight loss goals

Here is a list of foods to remove from your diet over time. Along the way, you will find that there are additional items you prefer to avoid, which is fine. Start with eliminating a few of these foods and notice the immediate difference in your overall health and energy.

Soda, sports drinks, sweetened beverages

In general, eat your calories. Our bodies tend to feel more satisfied with the experience of chewing and eating versus just drinking. Drinks with added sugar, such as soda, are empty calories, which promote weight gain, contribute to cavities, and can even leach healthy nutrients (such as calcium) from our body.

SWAPS: infused water, herbal tea, unsweetened, sparkling water with fresh citrus slices

Candy

Hopefully this is obvious, but candy is so abundant that sometimes it sneaks in easily. And now, there are many products that appear healthier because they incorporate “super fruit” or dark chocolate, but alas, they are STILL candy. Make your splurges valuable by avoiding packaged candy products, even the healthier version.

SWAPS: cacao powder combined with naturally occurring sugar in fruit creates a delicious dessert with no added sugar.

STRATEGY: only quality splurges (homemade summer peach tart with pure vanilla ice cream, anyone?). Skip the store bought. Allow yourself a treat on occasion and really enjoy the indulgence.

Products with Added Sugar

There is sugar in everything. From granola bars to yogurt to cereal to salad dressing, sugar is prevalent in our grocery stores. Try to become accustomed to adding natural sweeteners at home. Instead of sweetened yogurt, add fresh fruit to plain yogurt.

Take it a step further and try to sweeten naturally. Instead of honey in your smoothie, add a date for sweetness or use a small amount of 100% pure vanilla extract. As you remove sugar, your palate will become more accustomed to the natural taste of foods. Sugar is an addiction so find ways to wean yourself off which will lead to a long lasting habit.

SWAPS: fresh or dried fruit, cinnamon, 100% natural extracts.

Artificial Sweeteners

The research will likely remain inconclusive, but you don't need research to tell you that chemicals are bad.

SWAPS: allow your body to become accustomed to natural sweetness from food. Use fresh/dried fruit for sweetness as often as possible.

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Starchy white products, store bought cakes, pastries, toaster waffles, muffins

There are various opinions and perspectives regarding a variety of grain-based or grain free diets. Ultimately, some of this will come down to personal decisions regarding foods that provide energy and keep you satisfied. I do recommend including grains, legumes, and/or starchy vegetables in moderation. However, when selecting grains, it is always best (both for you body and your wallet) to select grains in the most natural forms: whole oats, quinoa, brown rice. Starchy food products such as bagels, sugar cereals, crackers, pretzels, and chips are void of nutritional value since they are usually made with refined flour and simply add calories, fats, and sugar with minimal nutritional value.

SWAPS: ideally, whole unprocessed grains

STRATEGY: if selecting a store-bought product, such as sprouted grain or whole grain bread or a corn or whole grain tortilla, look for an option less than 100 calories per slice with at least 3gm of fiber, 4gm of protein, less than 150mg of sodium, and less than 1gm of sugar. Homemade roasted garbanzo beans or air-popped popcorn with herbs and spices of your choice are a great alternative if you crave a crunchy snack.

Processed meat products and cold cuts

The regular consumption of processed meats such as sausages, hot dogs, bacon, and cold-cuts has been linked to increased risk of colorectal cancer and heart disease. These products are generally high in sodium and contain a significant amount of fat, specifically saturated fat.

SWAPS: lean meat such as organic chicken, pork tenderloin, wild fish, grass-fed beef.

STRATEGY: if you use these foods on occasion, look for a poultry-based, low fat, low sodium versions.

Margarine

Margarine was created as a supposed “healthier” alternative to butter, but its not. Some margarine is full of transfat, others are made of mostly chemicals.

SWAPS: olive oil, avocado, or pure nut butter, ideally. Pure coconut oil and grass fed butter are more natural alternatives, but both are still high in saturated fat. Certainly, used sparingly, these are a good occasional alternative.

Processed peanut butter

Similar to margarine, these products are generally high in saturated and trans fat. What started as a healthy food such as peanuts or almonds, is stripped of good nutrition and processed with added sugar, lower quality fat, salt, and stabilizers.

SWAPS: pure nut butter without added sugar or salt. Its more expensive but so worth it.

Cream cheese, mayonnaise, creamy salad dressings, and sour cream

These white condiments are all almost purely fat, mostly saturated fat, oh, and salt. Unfortunately the “light” versions of these products are full of chemicals, stabilizers, and salt so its better to just avoid them.

SWAPS: lowfat plain yogurt or greek yogurt work as replacements in nearly all recipes. For dairy free, use a cashew or avocado base to create a creamy product. Use good quality olive oil and vinegar or citrus juice as a dressing and whisk in a bit of mustard (a natural emulsifier) to hold it together.