

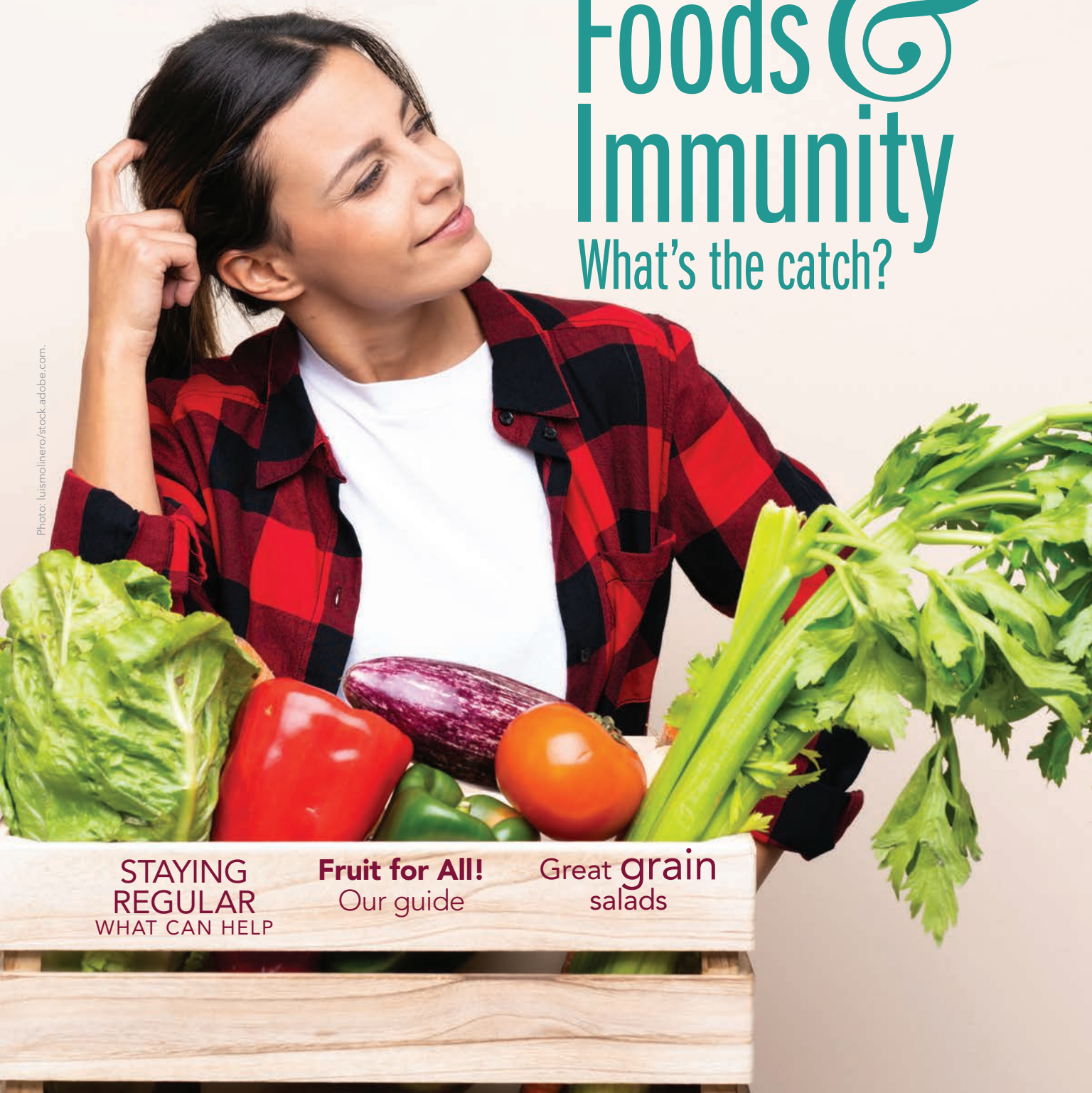
# Nutrition *Action*

JUNE 2020 \$2.50

HEALTH LETTER®  
CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

## Foods & Immunity What's the catch?

Photo: luismlinero/stock.adobe.com



**STAYING  
REGULAR**  
WHAT CAN HELP

**Fruit for All!**  
Our guide

**Great grain**  
salads



M E M O

# ONLINE GROCERS NEED AN OVERHAUL



As coronavirus hit the United States this spring, online grocery shopping skyrocketed.

Before then, sales—roughly \$17.5 billion a year—accounted for a respectable 6 percent of total U.S. grocery spend-

ing. By 2025, they may hit \$100 billion, says the industry's trade association.

Are online retailers encouraging healthy or unhealthy purchases? In 2019, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Nutrition Action's* publisher, conducted a [market scan](#) of six top grocers that offer online ordering in the Washington, DC, area: Amazon Prime Now, FreshDirect, Peapod, Safeway, Target, and Walmart Grocery.

For five staples—milk, bread, cereal, drinks, and chicken—we collected data on the retailers' promotions, pricing, and placements. We also rated the quality of fruits and vegetables that were delivered. The results:

- More than half of the promotions on the retailers' home pages and in their search results were for junk foods like soda, chips, candy, and cookies.
- The proportion of promotions for unhealthy foods ranged from 29 percent (FreshDirect) to 72 percent (Safeway).
- Roughly 75 percent of the retailers' emails about foods and beverages promoted junk.
- At Peapod and Safeway, discounts on unhealthy items were, on average, more than twice as steep as discounts on healthy foods.

■ More than half of the items in the top three search results for staple foods were unhealthy. For example, when we searched for "chicken," we often saw chicken nuggets.

■ Though two-thirds of the items that we ordered from retailers were healthy, nearly half of the "targeted promotions" later sent to us by Amazon Prime Now were for junk food. (Almost none of Peapod's were.)

■ On the upside, most fruits and vegetables had good color, taut skin, and few soft spots.

Online grocery shopping has the potential to curb impulse buying and boost Americans' access to healthy foods. But so far, online grocers are mirroring brick-and-mortar stores by championing junk food.

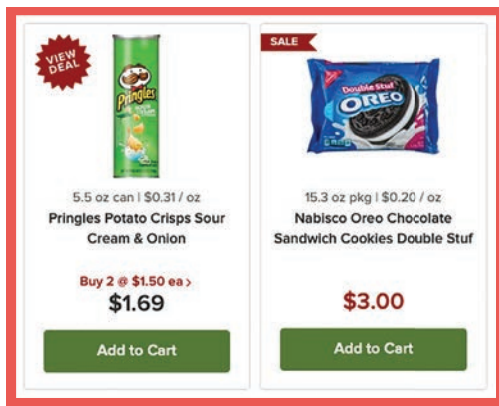
CSPI is [urging](#) the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop policies for online retailers that participate in the

SNAP program (formerly known as Food Stamps) to highlight only healthy foods and drinks in promotions on home, search, and checkout pages and in emails.

We also want the USDA to require retailers to disclose sponsorships so shoppers can separate ads from genuine search results.

With America's obesity and junk food epidemics raging, the last thing we need is an online marketplace that stokes, rather than douses, the flames.

*Peter G. Lurie, MD, MPH, President  
Center for Science in the Public Interest*



Many online retailers push junk foods more than healthy foods.

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# Foods & Immunity

## What's the catch?

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

“How to strengthen your immunity during the coronavirus pandemic,” promised the [CNN.com headline](#) in March. ABC’s “Good Morning America” [told viewers](#) how to “supercharge your immune system.”

As the coronavirus swept the nation, one media outlet after another recommended stocking up on red bell peppers, broccoli, oranges, and other fresh fruits and vegetables. That’s good advice, but it may lead people to do the right thing for the wrong reason.

### WHAT DOESN'T MATTER

From spinach to sweet potatoes and papayas, there’s no shortage of claims about foods—or supplements—that can kick your immunity into high gear.

Of course, a healthy diet matters. It can cut your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. And all four conditions are linked to more severe COVID infections (see p. 6).

But many claims about food and immunity have a **catch**. The biggest one: There’s no good evidence that any food (or supplement) can protect you from COVID-19.

Here are six others.

### 1 You don't want an immune boost.

“16 Immunity-Boosting Foods a Nutritionist Recommends,” promised [Health.com](#) in March.

**The catch:** “The concept of boosting your immune system is flawed,” says Michael Starnbach, professor of microbiology at Harvard Medical School.

“The immune system is a very finely tuned machine where all the parts are working to maintain a defense against foreign invaders, but to not be too reactive. Overreacting would tilt the balance toward causing autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.”

In those diseases, the immune system goes overboard, attacking not just invaders but your own body.

“So the idea that you’re going to globally boost your defense against

pathogens doesn’t take into account how the immune system works,” notes Starnbach.

Of course, there is one tried-and-true way to boost your immunity: vaccines.

“That is the one public health intervention that is remarkably effective at preventing infectious diseases,” says Starnbach.

“Vaccines put the immune system on high alert for the reappearance of a microorganism. But one has to engineer a vaccine for each microorganism. They don’t boost immunity globally.”

### 2 Look for studies that measure infections, not cells.

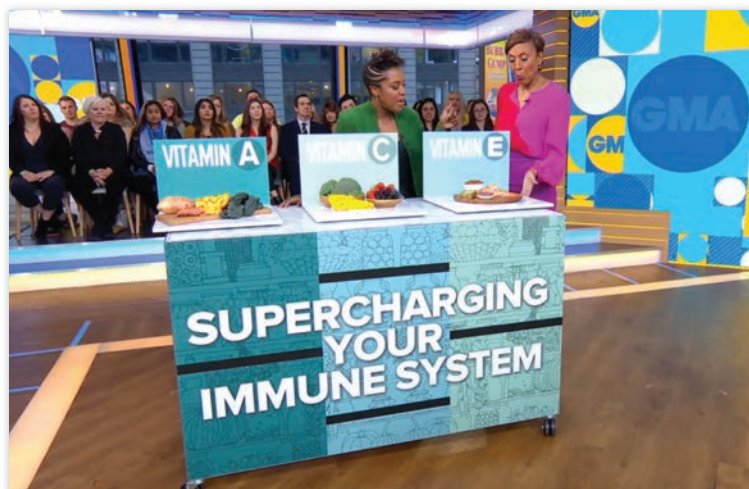
“Zinc helps cells in your immune system grow and differentiate,” a dietitian told [CNN.com](#) in March.

**The catch:** The rise or fall in one type of immune marker or cell doesn’t tell you much.

“The immune system has many moving parts,” says Starnbach. “If there’s a transient rise in one population of cells, it may well be offset by a suppression of other cells in order to keep everything in balance.”

When it comes to zinc, the research measuring infections isn’t clear.

In most studies, older people who were given zinc (10 to 20 milligrams a day) had the same risk of respiratory infections as those who took a pla-



Don't expect vitamin-rich fruits and vegetables—or any food or supplement—to “supercharge” your immune system.

Photo: luismolino/stock.adobe.com (top).



6 Oysters



Verywell / Alexandra Shytman

Oysters are good for your immune system because they're very high in zinc

Oysters are rich in zinc, [says verywellfit.com](#). But the evidence that they prevent respiratory infections is skimpy.

cebo.<sup>1,2</sup> (The Recommended Dietary Allowance, or RDA, for zinc is 8 mg a day for women and 11 mg for men.)

However, in one study—partly funded by a supplement company—older people who got 45 mg a day of zinc for a year had a lower risk of infections than those who got a placebo.<sup>3</sup> (More than a third of the participants started out deficient in zinc.) But no one has tried to replicate that (pre-COVID-19) 2007 study.

According to [CNN](#), “one meta-analysis revealed that zinc supplements may shorten the duration of symptoms of the common cold.” The network recommended “beans, nuts, cereal and seafood for zinc.”

**The catch:** That meta-analysis looked primarily at zinc lozenges that you suck on when you have a cold, not zinc-rich foods or zinc supplements that you swallow.<sup>4</sup>

Lozenges may shorten colds because they slowly release zinc into the throat, where the cold virus replicates and binds to cells. But whether even lozenges work is still uncertain (see Dec. 2019, p. 8).

### 3 Nutrients may only help if you're deficient.

“It’s important to note that no research has been done on foods that help fight against COVID-19 specifically,” said [CNBC](#) in April.

“However, previous studies have

found that eating certain foods can improve your health and strengthen your body’s ability to fight other invasive viruses.”

Not exactly.

Most of [CNBC’s](#) “9 healthy foods to boost your immune system during coronavirus”—like red bell peppers, broccoli, strawberries, spinach, and mushrooms—supposedly “fight other invasive viruses” because they contain zinc, beta-carotene, or vitamins C, D, or E.

**The catch:** Those foods are unlikely to help unless your diet is “inadequate” or “deficient” in those nutrients—that is, unless your blood levels are low enough to impair your body’s ability to function optimally.

(Many people get less than the RDA for a nutrient but are still fine, because the RDA has a built-in cushion to cover people with unusually high needs.)

“If you provide proper nutrition or supplements to severely malnourished people, they are less susceptible to infectious disease,” says Starnbach. “But

An analysis of 25 randomized controlled trials on roughly 11,000 people reported about a 20 percent lower risk of acute respiratory tract infections in those who were given vitamin D daily or weekly.<sup>5</sup> (The analysis, which was published in a British medical journal, looked at infections like colds and flu, not COVID-19.)

But vitamin D had the biggest impact on people with blood levels below 10 nanograms per milliliter, the UK’s definition of “deficient.” (Only about 5 percent of Americans have levels in our “deficient” range—less than 12 ng/mL. Another 18 percent of us have “inadequate” levels—12 to 19 ng/mL.<sup>6</sup>)

And even if you are deficient, vitamin D is no miracle worker.

In December, researchers reported on a study that gave a placebo or a single high dose of vitamin D to critically ill patients with deficient or inadequate vitamin D levels soon after they were admitted to intensive care units for ailments like pneumonia, acute respiratory failure, and shock (but not COVID-19).

Scientists stopped the study early when it became clear that those who got vitamin D were no more likely to survive.<sup>7</sup>

What about vitamin C, one of [Healthline.com’s](#) “15 Best Supplements to Boost Your Immune System Right Now”?

Vitamin C doesn’t cut the risk of catching a cold unless you’re doing intense exercise like an ultramarathon (see Dec. 2019, p. 8).

Healthline cites studies that gave huge doses of intravenous vitamin C to ICU patients with acute respiratory failure or sepsis (a life-threatening reaction to infection). But in the most recent clinical trials, vitamin C had no clear benefit in those patients.<sup>8,9</sup>

And what does intravenous vitamin C in patients in intensive care have to do with eating red bell peppers or taking vitamin C pills?

“Currently, no research supports the use of any supplement to protect against COVID-19 specifically,” says Healthline’s [disclaimer](#). Got *that* right.



Immunity aside, load up on produce. No need to wash it more than usual to remove coronavirus.

there’s no evidence that red bell peppers or broccoli have any effect on resistance to infectious diseases in someone who is adequately nourished.”

One vitamin that many Americans do get too little of: vitamin D.

## 4 More isn't always better.

"Vitamin E plays a key role in immunity," reported [Health.com](#) in March. "This fat soluble vitamin boosts the activity of immune cells to support the body's ability to fend off invading bacteria and viruses."

Vitamin E explains why [Health.com](#) calls sunflower seeds and almonds "immunity-boosting foods."

Some people may assume that the more vitamin E you take, the more fending off your body will do.

**The catch:** More isn't always better. In fact, more may be worse.

"You can't assume that if you take 10 times the normal amount, there's going to be some benefit," says Starnbach. "That's just not how vitamins work."

Two large studies have tested whether vitamin E can prevent respiratory infections like colds, flu, pneumonia, and bronchitis. Both used roughly 200 mg a day—about six times the RDA.

When researchers gave 451 Boston-area nursing home residents either vitamin E or a placebo for a year, the number of people with at least one infection was lower in the vitamin E group.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, when Dutch scientists gave vitamin E or a placebo to 652 people aged 60 or older for 15 months, the number of infections didn't differ.<sup>11</sup>

However, "we observed adverse effects of vitamin E on illness severity," wrote the authors. The vitamin E takers had longer infections, more symptoms, and were more likely to have a fever than the placebo takers. Oops.

## 5 "Immune support" claims are rarely backed by good evidence.

"Helps support your immune system," says Airborne's label. "Antioxidants to support immune function," says Emergen-C Immune+ Gummies.



Airborne toned down its earlier claim to "boost your immune system to help your body combat germs."

"24 Hour Immune Support," says Ester-C.

In mid-April, all three—and similar supplements—were out of stock on [CVS.com](#). Clearly, the coronavirus was leading consumers to scoop up anything with the word "immune" on its label.

**The catch:** Companies can get away with making claims like "support" without much evidence... unless they go too far.

Take Airborne. At first, the supplement—it was concocted by a second-grade teacher—promised to "boost your immune system to help your body combat germs."

The company urged users to take it "at the first sign of a cold symptom or before entering crowded, potentially germ-infested environments."

To back up its "help your body combat germs" claim, Airborne cited a randomized clinical trial. But in 2006, [ABC News reported](#) that the

study was conducted by "a two-man operation started up just to do the Airborne study. There was no clinic, no scientists and no doctors."

In 2007, lawyers for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Nutrition Action's* publisher, joined a class action lawsuit on behalf of consumers who wasted their money on Airborne. In 2008, the [company paid](#) \$23.3 million to settle.

And it isn't just supplements.

"I have a box of Cocoa Krispies in my office that says 'Now helps support your child's immunity,'" says Starnbach, referring to a 2009 label that also says "25% Daily Value of Antioxidants & Nutrients. Vitamins A, B, C & E."

"That claim only lasted a little while

because the company got such flack that it apparently decided that the business or regulatory consequences might be worse than the benefit for their sales," Starnbach adds.

Kellogg got more than flack. In 2011, the company [agreed](#) to pay \$5 million to settle a lawsuit charging that the claim misled consumers.

Cereals no longer make immune claims. But supplements are still cashing in.

## 6 Results may not apply.

"Yogurt is a great source of probiotics, which are good bacteria that can help promote a healthy gut and immune system," a doctor told [CNBC](#) in April. "Recent studies have also found probiotics to be effective for fighting

the common cold and influenza-like respiratory infections."

**The catch:** Which probiotics? They're not all the same.

CNBC linked to a poor-quality study—funded by a Chinese dairy company—that reported more colds and bouts of flu in people who drank an ordinary yogurt drink for 12 weeks than in those who drank a yogurt drink that also contained three strains of bacteria that are not normally in yogurt.<sup>12</sup>

"Many people assume that probiotics are interchangeable," says Pieter Cohen, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. "They're not."

The bottom line: It's way too early to know what probiotics can do.

"We know now that the microbiota organisms that live with us and on us are an important influence on our overall health, and that includes the immune system," says Harvard's Starnbach.

"But the ones that are there, for better or worse, are very difficult to change by adding organisms or nutrients to the gastrointestinal tract. We're just not there yet. We don't know what the right organisms are or how to get them to replace our existing organisms."



In 2011, Kellogg paid \$5 million to settle a lawsuit about its immunity claim.



## WHAT DOES MATTER









Eating more red bell peppers, broccoli, and oranges won't turn your immune system into a Navy SEAL team of virus fighters. But it's still good advice.

"In several countries—China, Italy, and now the United States—the folks who do worse with the COVID-19 infection tend to have co-morbidities like hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity," says Stephen Juraschek, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.<sup>13,14</sup>

"It will take time to sort out whether there's a causal relationship between those risk factors and severe cases of COVID," he cautions.

## DASH Diet

A DASH diet keeps a lid on blood pressure and LDL, which raise the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Here's a 2,100-calorie version. A Mediterranean diet is similar, but you'd use the "Wild Card" for olive oil. (Note: Some serving sizes are quite small.)

	Daily Servings
 <b>Vegetables &amp; Fruit</b> 1 SERVING: ½ cup (or 1 cup greens) or 1 piece fruit	11
 <b>Grains</b> 1 SERVING: ½ cup pasta or rice or cereal or 1 slice bread	4
 <b>Low-fat Dairy</b> 1 SERVING: 1 cup milk or yogurt or 1½ oz. cheese	2
 <b>Legumes &amp; Nuts</b> 1 SERVING: ½ cup beans or ¼ cup nuts or 4 oz. tofu	2
 <b>Poultry, Fish, Lean Meat</b> 1 SERVING: ¼ lb. cooked	1
 <b>Oils &amp; Fats</b> 1 SERVING: 1 Tbs.	2
 <b>Desserts &amp; Sweets</b> 1 SERVING: 1 tsp. sugar or 1 small cookie	2
 <b>Wild Card</b> Poultry, Fish, Lean Meat or Oils & Fats or Grains or Desserts & Sweets	1

Either way, those health problems are worth avoiding. And a healthy diet may trim your risk of all four.

"There's a wealth of evidence that we should eat a healthy Mediterranean-style or DASH-like diet that emphasizes fruits and vegetables, unsaturated fats like olive oil and fatty fish, lower-fat dairy products, and plant-based protein like beans and nuts, and that we should stay away from processed meats, fatty red meats, and the sweets and other refined carbs that some people cling to in stressful times," says Juraschek.

(DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.)

Why? "Those diets are proven to lower blood pressure and LDL, the so-called bad cholesterol," notes Juraschek.<sup>15</sup> "And high blood pressure and high LDL are two of the most prevalent risk factors for heart attack and stroke."

The same diets may also lower the risk of type 2 diabetes and memory loss (see Nov. 2019, p. 3, and Jan./Feb. 2020, p. 3).

That's not to say that eating a healthy diet today can help you fight off a virus that you inhale tomorrow. You can't unclog your arteries in a matter of days or weeks.

But some payoffs may come sooner. "A healthy diet with whole, unprocessed fruits and vegetables may help stave off unnecessary weight gain, a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes," says Juraschek.

That's not trivial, given that some food companies are nudging people to eat more processed or junk food while they're stuck at home.

Last year, researchers gave people unlimited access to either ultraprocessed or unprocessed foods for two weeks each (see Jul./Aug. 2019, p. 3).<sup>16</sup>

"When people ate the ultraprocessed foods, they ate more and gained weight," notes Juraschek.

"And that may matter more than ever now," he adds, since "we're not walking as much as we typically would when



Just what we needed in April—subtle hints to snack on junk food while we were cooped up at home.

we're going places."

Like many doctors, Juraschek is worried that the virus has made it harder to protect his patients' health.

"They're not necessarily going to urgent care for their chest pain or angina," he says. "We're concerned that we may not be able to intervene in time when people have flare-ups or worsening conditions."

Even getting the right dose of medicine to lower blood pressure is risky, because doctors are flying blind.

"People literally can't get to the doctor's office for an accurate measurement," says Juraschek.

"And they can't get a lab test to make sure the new dose isn't causing any collateral damage."

On the other hand, doctors needn't worry about the adverse effects of a healthy diet.

"If ever there were a time to eat a healthier diet," says Juraschek, "it's now." 🍌

- <sup>1</sup> *BMJ* 331: 324, 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.* 55: 35, 2007.
- <sup>3</sup> *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 85: 837, 2007.
- <sup>4</sup> *CMAJ* 2012. doi:10.1503/cmaj.111990.
- <sup>5</sup> *BMJ* 2017. doi:10.1136/bmj.i6583.
- <sup>6</sup> *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 110: 150, 2019.
- <sup>7</sup> *N. Engl. J. Med.* 381: 2529, 2019.
- <sup>8</sup> *JAMA* 322: 1261, 2019.
- <sup>9</sup> *JAMA* 323: 423, 2020.
- <sup>10</sup> *JAMA* 292: 828, 2004.
- <sup>11</sup> *JAMA* 288: 715, 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> *Synth. Syst. Biotechnol.* 3: 113, 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> *medRxiv*. doi:10.1101/2020.04.08.20057794.
- <sup>14</sup> *N. Engl. J. Med.* 2020. doi:10.1056/NEJMc2010419.
- <sup>15</sup> *JAMA* 294: 2455, 2005.
- <sup>16</sup> *Cell Metab.* 30: 67, 2019.

# Quick Studies

A snapshot of the latest research on diet, exercise, and more.

## Always Room for Dessert?



**D**oes a small entrée lead to a big dessert?

Researchers asked 74 people to eat as much of an entrée (macaroni and cheese) and a dessert (ice cream) as they wanted.

On four subsequent occasions, the scientists shrunk each participant's entrée to 90 percent, 85 percent, 80 percent, or 75 percent of the amount that he or she had eaten on the first day.

People averaged 360 calories' worth of the entrée on the first day and only 250 calories on the 75-percent day. Nevertheless, on all five days they ate roughly the same amount—about 95 calories' worth—of dessert.

**What to do:** Keep in mind that you may not compensate for small—or large—serving sizes. While a smaller entrée may not lead to a maxi-dessert, other studies suggest that a larger entrée may not lead to a mini-dessert.

[Appetite 2020. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2020.104684.](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.104684)

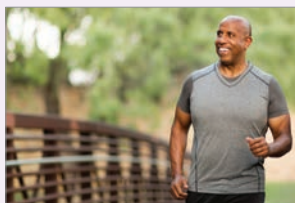
## LUTS Move!

**S**taying active may help prevent lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) like increased urgency and frequency in men.

Scientists tracked 25,725 men for up to 18 years. The most active men had the lowest risk of moderate or worse LUTS. But even those whose activity was equal to 2½ hours of brisk walking a week had a lower risk than those who did less.

**What to do:** Keep moving. This kind of study can't prove that staying active prevents LUTS, but it's good for your heart, brain, muscles, and more.

[J. Gen. Intern. Med. 2020. doi:10.1007/s11606-020-05814-1.](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-05814-1)



## Olive Oil & the Heart



**O**live oil is linked to a lower risk of heart disease in the Mediterranean region. Is the same true in the United States, even though we eat far less?

Researchers tracked roughly 93,000 Americans for 24 years. Those who consumed more than half a tablespoon of olive oil a day had an 18 percent lower risk of heart disease than those who consumed olive oil less than once a month. Blood markers of inflammation were also lower in olive oil eaters.

The risk of heart disease was no lower for olive oil than for other plant oils like soy or canola.

**What to do:** Replace saturated fats like butter with unsaturated oils. (Second best: tub margarines. Stick margarines are higher in sat fat.) This kind of study can't prove that olive oil or other unsaturated fats prevents heart attacks, but it fits with clear evidence that unsaturated fats lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol.

[J. Am. Coll. Cardiol. 75: 1729, 2020.](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amcc.2020.1729)

## Weight & Memory

**A**re thin people at greater risk for dementia, as studies have suggested?

Scientists tracked 1.1 million women for 18 years. Early in the study, those who started out underweight (or close to it) were more likely to be diagnosed with dementia than those with a

healthy weight. But that link nearly disappeared after 18 years, suggesting that thinness was an early sign—not a cause—of memory loss.

After 18 years, women who started out with obesity had a 41 percent higher risk of vascular dementia (often caused by mini-strokes)—but no higher risk of dementia due to Alzheimer's disease—than those who started out with a healthy weight.

**What to do:** Aim for a healthy weight. 🍌

[Neurology 2020. doi:10.1212/WNL.0000000000008779.](https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0000000000008779)



# Backed Up?

When the **going gets tough**, here's how to **get going**

BY CAITLIN DOW

If you've got problems with regularity, you're not alone. Whether it's occasional or chronic, you're no doubt looking for relief. "There are so many recommendations out there," says Jacqueline Wolf, a gastroenterologist and associate professor of medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. "Some of it works, and some is just folklore."

**H**ow do you know if you're irregular?

"We consider normal anywhere from going three times per day to three times per week," says Beth Israel Deaconess gastroenterologist Jacqueline Wolf.

But you could have a bowel movement every day and still be constipated. "Constipation also includes straining, having hard, lumpy stools, or not evacuating completely," says Wolf.<sup>1</sup>

What's to blame?

"Certainly a poor diet can have an impact," says Lucinda Harris, a gastroenterologist and associate professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Arizona.

"And if you don't eat, you don't stimulate your intestines. Eating too little can be an issue in older people."

Also check your medicine cabinet. "Opioids can induce constipation," says Harris. So can some blood pressure meds (diuretics, calcium channel blockers, and beta blockers) and tricyclic antidepressants and MAO inhibitors for depression.

"And as people age, they may lose some of the cells that act as the colon's pacemaker, so the muscles of the colon don't contract as well," says Harris.

Irregularity is also more common in women than men. "I have so many

women patients who say, with a touch of envy, 'My husband always has a bowel movement at the same time every day,'" says Harris. "We haven't quite figured out why, but most of the data points to a hormonal difference."

Here's what may (and may not) improve your trips to the commode.



Want more fiber? Replace fiber-poor foods like white potatoes with whole grains, beans, and loads of veggies.

## Fiber Fix?

If you're irregular, the first step is to up your fiber intake. But to work, the fiber has to increase stool volume, "and it can't get fermented by gut bacteria or broken down in transit," says Nicola McKeown of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University.<sup>2</sup> (McKeown has received funding from General Mills's scientific

arm and from Metamucil's manufacturer.)

Fiber comes in two types:

■ **Insoluble.** "Coarse, insoluble fiber helps move food through the digestive tract by stimulating the lining of the gut to secrete water and mucus, which softens the stool, making it easier to pass," explains McKeown. "Coarse wheat bran like Kellogg's All-Bran is a good example."

■ **Soluble.** Soluble fiber can boost stool bulk by absorbing water. But not all types of soluble fiber get the job done.

The fiber needs to form a gel, allowing it to hold water on its entire journey through the gut.

Enter psyllium, the laxation-friendly poster child of soluble fibers. It's in Kellogg's All-Bran Buds cereal and is the key ingredient in Metamucil.

In contrast, don't expect much from *prebiotic* soluble fibers (so-named because they feed gut bacteria). The poster child: inulin—aka chicory root—a processed fiber used in many Fiber One foods, fiber "gummies," and hundreds of other foods.

In three studies that enrolled a total of 140 people with constipation, only one (funded by an inulin maker) reported more bowel movements in inulin takers than in placebo takers.<sup>3-5</sup> And inulin made people more gassy.

Those results don't surprise McKeown. "If the fiber gets fermented by gut bacteria, it can't hold water, so it can't add to stool bulk."

"In fact, few of the isolated fibers that are added to foods actually help with





## Fibers with Benefits

Your goal: at least 25 grams a day (for women) or 38 grams a day (for men).

	Fiber (g)
<b>Cereals</b>	
Kellogg's All-Bran Buds (½ cup)	17
Kellogg's All-Bran Original (¾ cup)	12
Post Shredded Wheat Original (1½ cups)	8
Post Shredded Wheat Wheat'n Bran (1½ cups)	8
Kellogg's Raisin Bran (1 cup)	7
Post Bran Flakes (1 cup)	7
Oats, any brand (1 cup cooked)	4
<b>Legumes (cooked)</b>	
Black beans, lentils, pinto beans, or split peas (½ cup)	8
Chickpeas or kidney beans (½ cup)	6
<b>Grains &amp; Pasta (cooked)</b>	
Barley (1 cup) or bulgur (¾ cup)	6
Popcorn (4 cups)	5
Whole wheat pasta (1 cup)	5
Quinoa (¾ cup)	4
Brown rice (¾ cup)	3
<b>Bread &amp; Crackers</b>	
Wasa Crispbread, Light Rye (3)	6
Nabisco Triscuit Original (6)	3
Whole wheat bread (1 slice, 1.5 oz.)	3
<b>Fruits</b>	
Blackberries or raspberries (1 cup)	8
Pear (1)	6
Avocado (½)	5
Apple (1) or blueberries (1 cup)	4
Banana or orange (1)	3
Cherries or strawberries (1 cup)	3
Prunes (4)	3
<b>Vegetables (cooked)</b>	
Sweet potato (1)	4
Broccoli (½ cup) or green beans (¾ cup)	3
Baby carrots (8)	2
Brussels sprouts or kale (½ cup)	2
Cauliflower (5 florets)	2
Corn or spinach (½ cup)	2
<b>Nuts (amount closest to 1 oz.)</b>	
Almonds (23) or pistachios (49)	4
Peanuts (28) or peanut butter (2 Tbs.)	2

Sources: USDA and company information.

regularity," she adds. Among the duds: soluble corn fiber and wheat dextrin (the main ingredient in Benefiber).

Instead, stick to whole foods. "Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts, and seeds," says McKeown. That should give you a good mix of soluble and insoluble fiber.

Tip: Add fiber to your diet gradually. "A high-fiber diet may cause gas and bloating at first in people who were on a low-fiber diet," says McKeown.

If that isn't enough, try adding psyllium, coarse wheat bran, or prunes.

"Prunes have both fiber and sorbitol," says Wolf. Sorbitol, a naturally occurring sugar alcohol, helps retain water in the stool.

"But it can cause gas," adds Wolf. "And too much sorbitol can cause diarrhea." So introduce prunes slowly.

### Coffee to Go?

Coffee wakes up the mind. It may also wake up the gut. "Coffee stimulates the colon to contract," explains Wolf.

Not a coffee drinker? Eating a meal may have the same impact.

"When food hits the stomach, you get a reflex that stimulates the colon to contract, which is why a lot of people feel the need to go to the bathroom right after eating," says Wolf.

In one study (funded in part by a coffee industry group) on 12 people without constipation, regular coffee stimulated contractions in the colon similar to a meal, 23 percent more than decaf coffee, and 60 percent more than hot water.<sup>6</sup>

Can coffee help people who are often backed up? No studies have looked.

### Drink Up?

"We often recommend that people with constipation drink more water," says Harris. "But the issue hasn't actually been well studied."

If you're truly *dehydrated*, that could make you irregular. "Water hydrates and softens the stool, which helps it move through you more easily," says Wolf.

But if you're not dehydrated—your urine should be no darker than lemon-

ade—don't expect more water to help.

When 15 adults without constipation were instructed to double—and then triple—their usual fluid intake for two days each, their stool output didn't change...though they did urinate more.<sup>7</sup>

There's no need to guzzle water, Harris explains. "You just need to be adequately hydrated."

### Move to Move?

Can regular exercise keep you regular? Few good studies have looked.

"There just isn't a lot of evidence to support the idea that exercise is helpful for constipation," admits Harris. "Anecdotally, my patients always say that if they're more active, they have better bowel habits. It certainly can't hurt."

What's more, "we know that there are stronger contractions in the colon first thing in the morning. Take advantage of that by doing light exercise or stretching, eating breakfast, and maybe drinking a cup of coffee right when you wake up."

### A Probiotic Push?

Are probiotics the cure for irregularity?

Many people seem to think so. In a survey of 2,557 British adults, roughly 35 percent of those with—versus 10 percent of those without—constipation reported taking probiotics.<sup>8</sup> And a majority assumed that probiotics had curbed constipation in scientific studies.

Surprise! Most haven't.

"There are a lot of claims out there for probiotics and regularity without studies to back them up," says Wolf.

Few probiotics have been tested for regularity in more than one study.

"The studies are often very small and poor quality, so it's hard to draw conclusions," says Harris.

Here's what the best studies have found. Even though all were company funded, none had impressive results.

■ **Bifidobacterium lactis DN-173 010.** (In *Activia* yogurt.) Among 126 Chinese women who reported having fewer than three bowel movements per week, those who ate yogurt with 12.5 billion CFU

(colony-forming units) daily for two weeks had softer stools and averaged 1½ more bowel movements during the second week than the placebo eaters.<sup>2</sup>

■ **Bifidobacterium lactis BB-12.** (In *Nancy's yogurt, Good Belly Probiotics bars and cereal, etc.*) In 1,248 Europeans who reported having two to four bowel movements per week, those who took either 1 or 10 billion CFUs a day for four weeks had no more bowel movements than placebo takers.<sup>10</sup>

■ **Bifidobacterium lactis HN019.** (In *Tropicana Essentials Probiotics drinks, Kellogg's Happy Inside cereals, etc.*) Among 228 French adults with constipation, those who took 1 billion or 10 billion CFU a day for four weeks had no more bowel movements and their stools were no softer than placebo takers.<sup>11</sup>

## A Foot Stool?

“The #1 way to #2,” proclaims the Squatty Potty [website](#).

“Squatty Potty is the original toilet stool that positions your body in a natural, comfy squat. This toilet posture helps you to be healthier and feel better—all while having the best poops of your life.”

When you sit on a standard toilet, your rectum has a bend in it. “Elevating your feet helps straighten that angle, which makes it easier to go,” says Wolf.

That may especially help people avoid straining, which “can lead to hemorrhoids or anal tears,” says Wolf.

Long before the Squatty Potty made its way into millions of American bathrooms, “I told people to put their feet on a stack of telephone books,” says Wolf. “But who has telephone books anymore?”

That said, if you’re looking for robust evidence that a foot stool can help you have “the best poops of your life,” you won’t find it. The few studies that have looked were small, poorly designed, and enrolled people without irregularity.<sup>12,13</sup>

“If you’re not struggling or straining, do you need it?” asks Wolf. “Probably

not. But it may help you go faster, and people sure are in a hurry these days.”

A [trial](#) is currently testing the Squatty Potty in people who are irregular. In the meantime, a foot stool may be worth a try, says Wolf.

“It makes sense that it would help.”

## Laxatives for a Smooth Move?

If you’re piling on the beans, whole grains, fruit, and veggies and you still aren’t regular, it may be time to consider an over-the-counter laxative. They come in two main varieties:

■ **Osmotic.** “Osmotic laxatives draw water into the colon, which softens the stool and makes them easier to pass,”



Can a Squatty Potty improve your poops by straightening out the bend in your rectum? A study is looking.

explains Wolf. “Those are the most gentle of the laxatives.”

Polyethylene glycol—the active ingredient in MiraLAX—is the most widely studied laxative.

In the two main studies that compared MiraLAX to a placebo in (roughly 440) adults with chronic constipation, those randomly assigned to take the laxative every day for two weeks to six months had two to three more bowel movements per week and reported less straining.<sup>14,15</sup> (Both studies were funded by MiraLAX’s manufacturer.)

“It’s both safe and effective, so it’s worth a try,” says Harris.

■ **Stimulant.** Stimulant laxatives move the stool along by helping the colon

contract. They include senna (the active ingredient in Ex-Lax) and bisacodyl (in Dulcolax Overnight Relief).

No good trials have tested senna in people with chronic constipation.

In one study funded by the maker of Dulcolax, researchers randomly assigned 356 British adults with chronic constipation to take a placebo or up to 10 milligrams of Dulcolax a day.<sup>16</sup> Over the next four weeks, the Dulcolax takers had roughly five bowel movements per week (and reported less straining) compared with just two per week for the placebo takers.

The downside? Those taking Dulcolax had far more bouts of diarrhea and abdominal pain.

Are laxatives dangerous?

“They’re usually safe if you use them at the dose on the label,” says Harris. “But if you overuse laxatives, you can get chronic diarrhea and can disturb the body’s balance of electrolytes like potassium and magnesium.” That can lead to dehydration and, in extreme cases, heart or kidney failure.

“If you’re taking laxatives daily, consult your doctor,” suggests Wolf. Something else may be going on that a doctor can help you address.

Or your doctor may recommend a prescription medication.

“A pill is not necessarily going to make you all better, but it may be helpful along with other lifestyle changes.” 🍌

<sup>1</sup> *Med. J. Aust.* 209: 86, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *J. Acad. Nutr. Diet.* 117: 251, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *Int. J. Food Sci. Nutr.* 62: 164, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> *Nutr. Hosp.* 27: 123, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> *Int. J. Food Sci. Nutr.* 68: 82, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> *Eur. J. Gastroenterol. Hepatol.* 10: 113, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> *J. Clin. Gastroenterol.* 28: 29, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> *Nutrition* 61: 157, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> *World J. Gastroenterol.* 14: 6237, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> *Br. J. Nutr.* 114: 1638, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> *Gut Microbes* 9: 236, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> *J. Clin. Gastroenterol.* 53: 216, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> *Low. Urin. Tract Symptoms* 2: 16, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> *Am. J. Gastroenterol.* 95: 446, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> *Am. J. Gastroenterol.* 102: 1436, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> *Clin. Gastroenterol. Hepatol.* 9: 577, 2011.

# The Healthy Cook

## Great Grains



Wheat berries are nutty-tasting whole wheat kernels. To make 2 cups, bring 4 cups of water to a low boil, add 1 cup wheat berries, cook about 20 minutes, and drain. This dish will be on the table 15 minutes later. 🍴

### Snappy Wheat Berries

 SERVES 4

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 cup fresh dill fronds<br/>a few fresh mint leaves<br/>(optional)</li><li>2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil</li><li>½ tsp. kosher salt<br/>freshly ground black pepper,<br/>to taste</li><li>3 Tbs. + 1 Tbs. chopped<br/>pistachios</li><li>2 cups cooked wheat berries,<br/>warm or cold</li><li>2 cups snap peas, trimmed and<br/>sliced</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Make the dill sauce: In a blender, combine all but a few dill fronds with the mint (if using), olive oil, salt, pepper, 3 Tbs. of pistachios, and ¼ cup of water. Blend until smooth, 30–45 seconds.</li><li>2. In a large bowl, toss the dill sauce with the wheat berries. Add the snap peas and toss everything together.</li><li>3. Top with the remaining 1 Tbs. of pistachios and the reserved dill fronds.</li></ul> <p><i>PER SERVING (1 cup):</i> calories 270   total fat 11 g<br/>sat fat 1.5 g   carbs 37 g   fiber 8 g   total sugar 2 g<br/>added sugar 0 g   protein 9 g   sodium 250 mg</p> |
|---|--|



**For more  
grain salads**

Go to [nutritionaction.com/grainsalads](https://nutritionaction.com/grainsalads)  
for *Tomato Basil Bulgur Salad &  
Quinoa Bowl with Ginger Dressing*

**For cooking  
advice**

Write to Chef Kate at  
[healthycook@cspinet.org](mailto:healthycook@cspinet.org)

# Fruit for All

## 5 reasons to eat more

BY LINDSAY MOYER & BONNIE LIEBMAN

**E**at more fruits and vegetables. That advice goes for just about everyone. When it comes to fruit, it's not just about the vitamins and minerals (plenty) or the calories (few). Who can resist a bite of a sweet summer peach, a wedge of juicy watermelon, or a succulent mango? Here are five reasons to fill up your fruit bowl.

The information for this article was compiled by Kaamilah Mitchell.

### 1. They pack in nutrients

The list is impressive. Many fruits supply fiber, potassium, vitamin C, folate, and carotenoids (like beta-carotene and lutein). And our scores (see "Fruit Face-off") don't even give credit for phytochemicals that may matter.

But don't rush out and trade in your cantaloupe for (top-ranked) pink guavas. (Thanks to their seedy centers, flavorful guavas are more likely to end up in juices, jams, and pastries than in one of your grocer's fruit bins. Too bad.)

Instead, repeat after us: All fruits are good fruits. Sure, some are standouts (see "Top 5"). For example, raspberries are rich in fiber and kiwis pack in the vitamin C. But what would life be like without grapes or nectarines?

Fruit salad, anyone?

### 2. They're low in calories per bite

A serving of most fresh or frozen fruit (5 oz., or about 1 cup or 1 piece) has just 50 to 100 calories. Fruit is high in water, so it's low in calories per bite. That's not true for raisins, prunes, and other *dried* fruits. Thanks to less water, they have 100 to 120 calories in a petite ¼ cup serving (1½ oz.).

It's not just a matter of water. Whole fruit keeps you full for longer than 100% fruit juice. Chewing on its intact plant cells may explain why.

### 3. They protect the heart & brain

Fruits and vegetables are the bedrock of a blood-pressure-lowering [DASH](#) (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)

diet, which includes about 2½ cups of fruit a day.

Why does fruit matter? For starters, eating plenty of fruit is a good way to pile up the potassium, which lowers blood pressure in people with hypertension. That may help explain why studies that track thousands of people for years find that those who eat more fruit have a lower risk of heart attack and stroke.

### 4. They're easy

In the time it takes to unwrap a granola bar or tear open a bag of sugary "fruit" snacks, you could bite into an apple, peel a banana, skin a clementine, or pop open a pint of blueberries.

What's more, stockpiling frozen fruit means that strawberries, raspberries, cherries, etc., can chill out until the moment your yogurt, oatmeal, or smoothie is ready for them. Mmm.

Sure, slicing into a pineapple, melon, or anything with a thick rind or large pit takes a slightly bigger commitment. But YouTube is full of videos on "how to cut a papaya" and more. Trust us; the payoff is worth it.

### 5. They're delicious

But you don't need us to tell you that. Turn the page for our guide to buying everything from apples to watermelon.

## Top 5

### FIBER

Kumquats  
Raspberries  
Guavas (pink)  
Blackberries  
Pomegranates

### POTASSIUM

Guavas (pink)  
Bananas  
Dried apricots  
Kiwis (gold or green)  
Dried peaches

### VITAMIN C

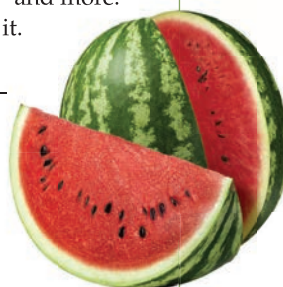
Guavas (pink)  
Kiwis (gold or green)  
Lychees  
Papayas  
Strawberries

### FOLATE

Guavas (pink)  
Mangos  
Pomegranates  
Papayas  
Kiwis (gold or green)

### CAROTENOIDS

Guavas (pink)  
Watermelons  
Papayas  
Persimmons  
Grapefruits (pink or red)



# Fruit Face-off

We calculated a score for each fruit by adding up its percentage of the Food and Drug Administration's Daily Value, or DV, for nine nutrients. (We counted each nutrient equally.) Carotenoids have no DV, so we devised our own recommended intake.

For example, a serving of strawberries has 91% of the DV for vitamin C (91 points), 10% for fiber (10 points), 8% for folate, 5% for potassium, 4% for magnesium, 3% for vitamin K, 3% for iron, and 2% for calcium, plus 1% of our daily target for carotenoids. That gives it a score of 127 points. The chart doesn't show vitamin K, calcium, iron, or magnesium numbers because they're low for most fruits.

The scores assume that you eat the same amount of any fresh fruit (5 oz., which is roughly 1 piece or 1 cup) or dried fruit (1½ oz., or ¼ cup). A bigger serving will boost the score and the calories.



## KEY

Percentage of the recommended daily intake:

- less than 2%
- 2% to 10%
- 11% to 50%
- 51% to 100%
- more than 100%

Fruit	Score	Carotenoids	Vitamin C	Potassium	Folate	Fiber	Calories
Guava, pink	556	+	+	●	●	●	100
Kiwi, gold	294	○	+	●	●	●	90
Kiwi, green	240	●	+	●	●	●	90
Papaya	201	●	●	●	●	●	60
Kumquats	143	●	●	●	●	●	100
Watermelon	140	+	●	●	○	●	40
Cantaloupe	135	●	●	●	●	●	50
Lychees	134	○	+	●	●	●	90
Orange	127	●	●	●	●	●	70
Strawberries	127	○	●	●	●	●	45
Grapefruit, pink or red	121	●	●	●	●	●	60
Blackberries	116	●	●	●	●	●	60
Raspberries	113	●	●	●	●	●	70
Mango	111	●	●	●	●	●	80
Persimmon	108	●	●	●	●	●	100
Pineapple	100	○	●	●	●	●	70
Tangerine	89	●	●	●	●	●	70
Pomegranate	83	○	●	●	●	●	120
Star fruit	83	●	●	●	●	●	45
Apricots	79	●	●	●	●	●	70
Grapefruit, white	71	○	●	●	●	●	45
Rhubarb, cooked with sugar	70	●	●	●	○	●	160
Blueberries	61	●	●	●	●	●	80
Banana	58	○	●	●	●	●	120

	Score	Carotenoids	Vitamin C	Potassium	Folate	Fiber	Calories
Honeydew melon	55	○	●	●	●	●	50
Peaches, dried	55	●	●	●	○	●	100
Prunes	49	●	○	●	○	●	100
Apricots, dried	48	●	○	●	○	●	100
Figs	47	●	●	●	●	●	100
Plum	47	●	●	●	○	●	60
Cherries	43	●	●	●	○	●	90
Figs, dried	43	○	○	●	○	●	100
Grapes	42	●	●	●	○	●	100
Nectarine	42	●	●	●	○	●	60
Peach	41	●	●	●	○	●	50
Pear	39	○	●	●	●	●	80
Pineapple, canned in juice	33	○	●	●	○	●	80
Peaches, canned in juice	32	●	●	●	○	●	60
Apple	31	○	●	●	○	●	70
Currants, dried	28	○	●	●	○	●	120
Dates, dried	28	○	○	●	○	●	110
Fruit cocktail, canned in juice	28	●	●	●	○	●	60
Raisins	25	○	○	●	○	●	120
Pears, canned in juice	20	○	●	●	○	●	70
Applesauce, unsweetened	15	○	○	●	○	●	60
Cranberries, dried	13	○	○	○	○	●	120

## Recommended Daily Intakes

Carotenoids: 6,000 mcg<sup>1</sup>  
 Vitamin C: 90 mg  
 Potassium: 4,700 mg  
 Folate: 400 mcg DFE  
 Fiber: 28 g

Vitamin K: 120 mcg  
 Calcium: 1,300 mg  
 Iron: 18 mg  
 Magnesium: 420 mg

<sup>1</sup> Estimate based on typical intakes.

Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](https://www.ars.usda.gov/).

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# THE FRUIT BASKET



## TROPICAL FRUITS

### Mangos

- Ripe mangos should give slightly when squeezed gently. Sniff for a sweet aroma. Color isn't a good way to tell whether a mango is ripe.
- Honey mangos—also called Champagne or Ataulfo—are smaller and sweeter. They're in season from March to June. Don't miss 'em.
- Want to skip the peeling, pitting, and chopping? Snack on a bag of frozen mango chunks.

### Papayas

- Let ripen at room temperature until the skin is mostly yellow-orange.
- Slice in half lengthwise, scoop out the black seeds with a spoon, cut off the rind, then slice into chunks.
- Top with a squeeze of fresh lime juice before you dig in. The acidity really peeps up the flavor.

### Kiwis

- Don't want to peel? Try a gold kiwi. Its (edible) skin is less fuzzy than a green kiwi's. And the yellow flesh—it holds a smaller core and fewer seeds—is sweeter.
- Gold kiwis have nearly twice as much vitamin C as green kiwis. Greens have more vitamin K. So mix it up!
- Gold kiwis are easiest to find from May to November.
- Keep your eyes peeled for kiwi berries. They pop up for a short time in fall or winter. The grape-size fruit has smooth (edible) skin and kiwi-like flesh.

### Pineapples

- Look for deep-green leaves and yellowish skin.
- Cut them up when they start to smell sweet, then refrigerate.

### Bananas

- Keep them on the countertop. Storing them in the fridge slows ripening and turns the skins black.
- On the verge of overripe? Peel, chop, and freeze. A few chunks of frozen banana take just about any smoothie from lackluster to creamy and sweet.
- Don't want your bananas to ripen so fast? Store them away from other fruits and wrap their stem ends in a bit of plastic wrap.



## APPLES & PEARS

### Apples

- Don't toss the skin. It contains about half the apple's fiber.
- Want to go beyond Red Delicious? Try Honeycrisp, Cosmic Crisp, Fuji, SweeTango, Ambrosia, Envy, Kiku, Lady Alice, Jazz, or (naturally non-browning) Opal.

### Pears

- Color isn't a good way to tell if a pear is ripe. While a Bartlett's skin color brightens as it ripens, most varieties show little change.
- The pear producers' advice: "Check the neck." Pears are ripe when the flesh around the stem yields to gentle pressure.
- Exception: Asian pears (which are round like apples) stay crisp. They're picked when ripe, so you can eat them as soon as you buy them. Try one sliced in a leafy green salad.



## STONE FRUITS

### Peaches, Plums, Apricots

- Let soften in a closed brown paper bag on the countertop until they yield slightly to the touch. Store in the fridge for a few days if you're not ready to eat them.
- Add fresh slices to yogurt, cereal, oatmeal, or grain or green salads.
- Don't forget summer's dazzling hybrids like pluots, plumcots, and apriums.

### Cherries

- To prevent them from getting soft and moldy, don't wash them until you're ready to serve.
- Toss frozen pitted dark sweet cherries in oatmeal, smoothies, or yogurt.

## Tips for buying, ripening, and eating fruit



### CITRUS FRUITS

#### Oranges

- Enjoy pink-fleshed Cara Cara or maroon blood oranges from December to May. Both add a pop of color to salads.
- Like clementines? Also try tangy, juicy, easy-to-peel satsumas from October to January and larger, super-sweet Sumos from January to April.

#### Lemons

- Meyer lemons are a little sweeter and less acidic than regular lemons.

#### Grapefruits

- Look for thin, smooth skin. And the heavier they are compared to grapefruits of a similar size, the juicier they are.



### BERRIES

- To prevent any kind of berries from getting soft or moldy, don't wash them until you're ready to serve.
- Got extra fresh berries? Freeze 'em on a tray so they don't stick together. Then transfer to an airtight container or bag.
- For the most intense flavor, try (pea-size) wild blueberries. For most of the year, you'll only find them in the freezer case. Exception: late summer in New England, where they're picked fresh.



### MELONS

- The stem end of a cantaloupe should have a smooth, round, depressed scar.
- A ripe cantaloupe has a yellowish cast to its rind. Honeydews are ripe when they have a creamy yellow color and are tacky to the touch.
- The underside of a ripe watermelon has a creamy yellow spot from where it sat on the ground and ripened.
- Scrub melon rinds under running water with a clean produce brush before cutting.
- Mini ("personal") watermelons are easier to cut.

## Pick Organic?

If a fruit doesn't have a rind or inedible peel, you can help reduce your exposure to pesticide residues by buying organic. (That rule of thumb isn't perfect because some pesticides get into a fruit's flesh, but it should help.)

If you also buy organic bananas, cantaloupes, or other fruit with peels or rinds, think of it as a present to the planet and to farmworkers.

Just keep in mind that if it's a choice between eating fruit grown with pesticides and not eating fruit, you're far better off eating the fruit.

A few examples:

#### Buy organic for you & the planet

Apples
Blackberries
Blueberries
Cherries
Grapes
Nectarines
Peaches
Plums
Raspberries
Strawberries

#### Buy organic for the planet

Bananas
Cantaloupes
Grapefruits
Honeydew melons
Mangos
Oranges
Papayas
Pineapples
Pomegranates
Watermelons

## Don't Fear Fruit

Worried about catching the coronavirus from fruit? **Don't be.** Just do what you always do: **rinse fresh produce** under running water (don't use soap, detergent, or disinfectants). And wash your hands before preparing or eating any food. 🍌



## FOOD FIND

### Flower Power



"It's not actually rice," says the **Trader Joe's** frozen **Riced Cauliflower Stir Fry** package. "It's cauliflower, cut into very small pieces, resembling short grain white rice."

Joe's onto something. Plain refrigerated or frozen "riced" cauliflowers are a dime a dozen. But Trader's jazzes up its cauliflower crumbles so they can go from

freezer to fried rice stand-in within minutes. Make that stand-out! The green peas, red peppers, grilled corn, tamari, scallions, sesame oil, ginger, and garlic see to that.

Just sauté the bag's contents in 2 Tbs. of oil for 6 or 7 minutes, until the "rice" browns lightly.

Each serving (about ½ cup cooked) ends up with 100 or so calories, 190 milligrams of sodium, and 7 grams of carbs (2 of those grams are fiber).

Want a meal? Add sautéed chicken, tofu, scrambled egg, or shelled edamame plus broccoli, cabbage, or other veggies.

No Trader's nearby? Try **Whole Foods 365 Fried Rice-Style Riced Cauliflower**. Or sauté **Green Giant Cauliflower Medley** (unseasoned riced cauliflower, green peas, onions, carrots, and scallions) in oil and a dash of reduced-sodium soy sauce.

All three can wait in your freezer until you're ready to pump up the veggies and dodge the refined carbs in fried rice.

Faster than takeout? You betcha.

[traderjoes.com](http://traderjoes.com)—(626) 599-3700

Photos: Trader Joe's (left), Kate Sherwood/CSP (bottom).



## DISH of the month

### Blackberry Salad

Whisk together 1 Tbs. white balsamic, 1 Tbs. olive oil, ¼ tsp. honey, ¼ tsp. salt, and a grind of black pepper. Toss with 4 cups salad greens, ½ cup blackberries, ½ cup cucumber, and ¼ cup radishes. Serves 4.

## FOOD FAIL



### Cashing in on Corona

"Keep your 6 packs close and everyone else 6 feet away," urged **Bud Light's** April 1 [tweet](#).

Then [this](#), three days later: "Stay home and drink beers."

And on April 5, the [coup de Bud](#): "When you're quarantined and have lost all concept of time." Below it, the words "DAY DRINK."

Just when people were penned in, missing

friends, family, their normal lives, and maybe even lost jobs or lost loved ones, Budweiser was there to help...its bottom line.

So what if encouraging people to "day drink" leads to one drink too many? So what if quarantine-plus-excess-alcohol ups the odds of child or spouse abuse?

Alcohol sales jumped 55 percent in the third week of March—and online sales were up 243 percent—compared to the same period a year ago, [reported Food Dive](#) in April.

How much was for today and how much was stockpiling? Who knows? Either way, Budweiser's tweets weren't exactly a public service.

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