

HEALTHY FOOD GUIDE

Produced by the Food is Medicine Institute

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	★★★★	★★★	★★	★
 FRUITS	All fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned; no added sugar)	Dried fruits (no added sugar) Canned fruits (in own juice)	Dried, canned, or other fruits with added sugar	
 VEGETABLES	All non-starchy vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned; no added salt or sugar)	Starchy vegetables; non- starchy vegetables with added salt or sugar	White potatoes	White potatoes with added salt or sugar (e.g., potato chips, fries)
 NUTS, SEEDS, & BEANS/LEGUMES	Nuts, seeds, peanut/ nut butters (no added salt or sugar) Legumes/beans and their spreads (e.g., hummus, tofu, tempeh)	Nuts, seeds, peanut/nut butters or legumes/beans with added salt	Nuts, seeds, peanut/nut butters or legumes/beans with added sugar	
 FATS & OILS	Soybean, canola, corn, sunflower, safflower, extra virgin olive oils; spreads from these oils	Other liquid plant oils (except tropical oils)	Tropical oils (e.g., coconut, palm) Butter, lard	Products containing partially hydrogenated oils (<i>trans</i> fats)
 GRAINS & STARCHES*	Minimally processed 100% whole grains (e.g., coarsely milled wheat, oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa, millet)	Finely milled 100% whole grains (e.g., most whole grain breads, pasta, breakfast cereals, crackers, tortillas)	Refined breads and cereals with no sugar (e.g., white bread, white rice, refined cereals, crackers, wheat tortillas)	Bakery sweets Refined grains or starches with added salt or sugar (e.g., cakes, pies, cookies, sweet muffins/breads)
 DAIRY	Fermented dairy including plain yogurt, cheese, and kefir†	Plain milk†	Most sugar-sweetened yogurts, ice creams, cream, shakes and milks	Highly processed dairy products
 MEAT, EGGS, & SEAFOOD	Fish, shellfish (except battered) Chicken, turkey (skinless, uncured)	Eggs Chicken with skin Lean beef or pork (little visible fat)	Smoked or salted fish Beef or pork (with visible fat) Battered fish or poultry	Processed or cured poultry/red meats (e.g., deli meats, bacon, baloney, sausage)
 SWEETS	Dark chocolate, 70%+	Dark chocolate, higher cocoa (50-70%); Dark chocolate covered nuts	Dark chocolate (<50%), milk chocolate, ice cream	Candy
 DRINKS	Water, seltzer Milk (reduced fat)† Soy/nut milks with no added sugar Unsweetened coffee, tea	Milk (whole fat)† Vegetable juice (no added salt)	Sweetened milk 100% fruit juice Soy/nut milks with added sugar	Sugar sweetened beverages (sodas, energy drinks, sports drinks, sweet teas, fruit drinks, pre-sweetened and flavored coffees)‡

RATING SYSTEM



These foods are the best for maintaining general health, recommended for frequent use. They naturally provide nutrients and bioactives, may contain pre and probiotics, are generally more slowly digested and absorbed, and also have few negative nutrient factors.



These foods are also healthy. They may have some less healthy features that four star (e.g., higher salt or added sugar, higher in certain fats, faster digestion, lower nutrients/bioactives) which is why they do not receive a four-star rating.



These foods may contain some healthful nutrients/bioactives, although often not in high concentrations. These typically have negative factors including high energy density or low fiber that make them less-ideal choices than three- and four-star rated foods.



These foods may have little nutritional benefit in terms of essential nutrients not provided via fortification. These foods have negative factors such as saturated fat, sugar, high sodium and/or high energy density that make it desirable to substantially limit their consumption in terms of frequency and/or quantity.

NOTES

* For grains/starches, extent of processing (intact food structure) matters. Minimally processed grains (e.g., barley, millet) and coarsely milled grains (e.g., stone ground wheat) generally have slower digestion and absorption than finely milled grains (e.g., most commercially available whole wheat products).

† The overall evidence suggests no major health differences between full fat as compared to low fat dairy, so choose the fat content you prefer. Soy or nut milks with calcium and vitamin D and no added sugar can be alternatives to milk.

‡ Compared to full sugar drinks, artificial and low-calorie sweeteners are preferable but should still generally be minimized. Among sugar sweetened drinks, lower sugar versions are preferable.