



Recipe Modification

Making a few simple changes or swaps to your favourite recipes can help to make them healthier - a process we like to call health-a-sizing. Many recipes can be easily modified with a few simple changes, such as the cooking methods and ingredients used. Fruit and vegetable content, sugar, salt, fats and fibre are all elements of a recipe that can be manipulated to improve the nutritional value of the dish.

Make sure to always test your recipes when making modifications and adjust the ingredients and method until you have a consistent result. The information below will assist in making recipes both healthier and easier to prepare.

Increasing fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and phytonutrients which all have significant health benefits. Consuming a variety of fruit and vegetables everyday reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

They also provide a range of colours, textures and flavours to any dish, therefore adding fruit or vegetables to every dish you cook or prepare at home can be both nutritious and delicious!

- Grating vegetables such as sweet potato, carrot and zucchini into meat dishes
- Add fruits or vegetables when baking cakes or muffins
- Use canned legumes or beans in dishes as a substitute for meat
- Add a side salad or side of cooked vegetables to dishes
- Choose tomato based sauces when preparing pasta dishes
- Use equipment such as a spiralizer or a peeler to prepare vegetables in different ways
- Experiment with different fruits and vegetables in salads e.g. asparagus, mango

Reducing or changing sugar

Sugar occurs naturally in many foods such as milk, fruit, vegetables and legumes. In this form it is locked away with other important nutrients, including vitamins, minerals and fibre.

Added sugars are refined in many forms such as cane sugar, syrups, honey, malts, glucose, dextrose and corn-syrup products. These sugars are often added in large amounts but contain fewer or no important nutrients. Since sugar is very high in kilojoules (energy), consuming large amounts can lead to weight gain, which increases a person's risk of developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

- Reducing or replacing up to 50% of the sugar in baked goods (such as breads and biscuits) with fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and/or vegetables or skim milk powder
- Adding extra spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg, or flavourings such as vanilla essence, to compensate for reduced sweetness
- Using unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit canned in juice rather than syrup
- Using dried fruits with no added sugar
- Stewing fruit without added sugar
- Using natural sweeteners such as natvia and stevia as a sugar substitute

Reducing or changing fat

Fat is essential to our diets for good health. However, we should be aware of the amount and type of fat we are eating. Fat is high in kilojoules (energy) so consuming too much of any fat can contribute to weight gain and therefore increase a person's risk of chronic disease.

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- Replacing half to all of the fat in baked goods with unsweetened apple puree or low-fat plain yoghurt
- Baking or grilling foods rather than frying
- Using reduced fat milk, cheese and yoghurt varieties
- Substituting cream with reduced fat evaporated milk, sour cream with low fat yoghurt and coconut cream with light coconut milk



Recipe Modification continued...

Reducing or changing fat, continued

The three main types of fats are:

- Saturated (animal-based products, palm oil, coconut products) e.g. fat on meat, butter and cream
- Unsaturated
 - polyunsaturated (Omega-3 and 6) e.g. fish, nuts, safflower and soybean oil
 - monounsaturated (plant based) e.g. olive oil, avocado and almonds
- Trans (processed fats mainly found in packaged foods)

Unsaturated fats are the healthiest types of fats to consume as they help reduce risk of chronic disease.

In a healthy recipe, you could highlight:

- Healthy unsaturated fats
- Low or reduced fat foods
- Lean or trimmed meats

- Choosing lean cuts of meats and skinless chicken, and trimming visible fat before cooking
- Using spray oils instead of pouring oil
- Replacing butter with unsaturated spreads such as margarine or spreads made from plant-based oils

Reducing salt

Salt is an essential nutrient for good health, however consuming too much salt may increase a person's risk of developing high blood pressure which may lead to heart disease, stroke and chronic kidney disease.

Salt is hidden in many processed and packaged foods such as bread, cheeses, biscuits, ham, bacon, sauces and canned fish. By consuming less processed and packaged food and cooking at home, salt intake can be controlled more easily.

- Avoiding adding salt at the table or to fillings in sandwiches, rolls and wraps
- Reducing or omitting the amount of salt in recipes
- Experimenting with herbs such as coriander or parsley, and spices such as paprika and cumin, which complement the food and add flavour in place of salt
- Choosing low salt varieties of canned vegetables
- Choosing reduced salt sauce and stock varieties
- Avoiding adding salt to the water when cooking pasta, noodles or rice
- Using garlic and onion powder rather than garlic and onion salt

Increasing fibre

Fibre is the part of plant foods that your body is unable to digest. It plays an important role in digestive health and regular bowel movement. Fibre can also help to regulate cholesterol and blood sugar levels and helps to keep you fuller for longer. Therefore it is beneficial to eat a diet which is high in fibre.

There are three main types of fibre:

- Soluble (dissolves in water) – e.g. oats, vegetables, fruits, beans
- Insoluble (does not dissolve in water) – e.g. wholewheat/wholemeal flour, nuts, vegetables
- Resistant starch (resists digestion) – e.g. seeds, unprocessed wholegrains, legumes, cooked and cooled potatoes and pasta

- Keeping the skin on fruits and vegetables whenever possible
- Adding extra vegetables to sandwiches, burgers, soups, hot meals and pizza toppings
- Adding fruits (fresh, frozen, canned or dried) to muffins, cakes, pikelets and pancakes
- Substituting wholemeal flour for half of the regular flour when making breads, muffins or other grain products
- Trying brown rice or legume pasta in place of white or plain varieties
- Using wholemeal or wholegrain breads, English muffins, pitabreads and wraps
- Adding nuts and seeds to salads