

20 Must-Have Items for Your Healthy Shopping Cart

Every kitchen needs a good foundation of healthy and tasty ingredients. Use this grocery list to choose nutritious foods that can lower your cholesterol and help you better control your blood sugar levels.

1. Milk The most significant source of calcium in the diet, containing many other essential nutrients, some fortified with vitamin D.

- Fat-free or low fat 1% milk
- Fat-free plain or flavored yogurt without added sugar
- Reduced fat cheese, string cheese or cottage cheese

2. Soy Beverage If you don't drink milk, unflavored low-fat soy beverage is fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

3. Beans These vegetables are not only very high in fiber, but also an excellent source of protein without the saturated fat. Include dried beans into several meals per week.

- Dried or canned kidney, pinto or black beans, soy beans (edamame)

4. Lentils A great source of protein and loaded with fiber, vitamins and minerals.

- Yellow, green and brown lentils

5. Nuts and seeds Sources of unsaturated fats, iron, magnesium, manganese, copper, calcium, vitamin B1, vitamin E.

- Walnuts, almonds, cashews, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, and pistachios
- Flax and sunflower seeds

6. Whole grains Whole grains are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber, all of which should be included in a well balanced diet.

- Whole-wheat bread and pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, cereals

7. Potatoes Some varieties of this starchy vegetable are full of vitamin A and fiber.

- Sweet potatoes

8. Fruits Valuable sources of vitamins, antioxidants and fiber. Have a variety, especially berries.

- Blueberries, strawberries or raspberries
- Apples, bananas, pears, pineapple, watermelon, mango, peaches, grapes

9. Citrus fruits Contain soluble fiber and vitamin C.

- Grapefruit, oranges, lemons or limes

10. Tomatoes This fruit is a great source of vitamins and antioxidants.

- Raw or canned

11. Vegetables The more color the better, fresh or frozen. They provide fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

- Dark green leafy spinach, watercress, kale
- Carrots, green beans, zucchini, onion, leeks, artichokes, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower

12. Lean meats Meat and meat substitutes are great sources of protein. The best choices are the cuts of meats and meat alternatives that are lower in saturated fat and calories.

- Poultry without skin, lean beef, veggie burgers or tofu

13. Fish and seafood Many types of fresh fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids help prevent clogging of the arteries. The ADA recommends eating non-fried fish 2 or 3 times a week.

- Salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, tilapia, bronzino, tuna, canned fish packed in water

14. Cooking oils These oils are an essential part of preparing any home cooked meal. Many cooking oils are sources of polyunsaturated fats, or “healthy” fats.

- Olive, canola, peanut, sunflower, soybean, corn or sesame oils or fat-free cooking spray

15. Herbs Be liberal with herbs for flavor to decrease use of fat and salt.

- Garlic, ginger, cilantro, oregano, basil, rosemary, sage, thyme, tarragon

16. Spices Replacing salt with spices for taste can help control blood pressure as well as blood glucose and blood lipids (cholesterol) levels.

- Cinnamon, paprika, nutmeg, cumin, turmeric

17. Dressings Choose liquid oil based dressings instead of cream based that can be high in saturated and trans-fats.

- Oil based salad dressing

18. Spreads There are healthy options instead of butter that taste great and can be used as a topping or while cooking.

- Trans free margarine or spreads with plant stanols or plant sterols

19. Sugar substitutes Reduced-calorie sweeteners or “sugar alcohols” contain fewer calories and less carbohydrates than the other sweeteners.

- Aspartame, sucralose, saccharine, sorbitol, mannitol

20. Beverages The ADA recommends choosing calorie-free drinks instead of regular soda, fruit punch, sweet tea and other sugar-sweetened drinks.

- Water and calorie-free drinks
- Teas: black or green

Reviewed by a Registered Dietitian