



WELLSOURCE
Naturopathic Medical Center

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~~~Whole Foods Diet~~~

What is a whole foods diet?

Selecting, preparing, and eating foods close to how they are found in nature: unprocessed; unrefined; and free from preservatives, additives, pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones.

Why is it important to eat a whole foods diet?

The health of the gut is essential to the health and well-being of the entire body (and mind!). The numerous alterations made to the foods that many Americans consume are deleterious to our health. Our diets are behind the rise of cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, and other systemic inflammatory diseases. Many other diseases such as depression, arthritis, colitis, osteoporosis, and Irritable Bowel Syndrome are also linked to diet.

1. Processed, Refined, and Packaged

Opt for food that is unprocessed and unrefined. This type of preparation removes essential nutrients from the food. That is why white flour must be “enriched”- because refining the flour removes all the vitamins and minerals that were originally in the product!

Packaged food is laden with unnatural additives and preservatives. One tip is to do most of your shopping on the perimeter of the supermarket. That’s where you’ll find fresh, non-packaged foods. The frozen section is also good for fruits and vegetables.

2. Organic

Certified organic foods are free from pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals are ubiquitous in our environment today, and most of them remain untested as to their effects on human and animal health.

The most important category of foods to buy organic is animal products. Non-organic butter has become the leading source of

PCB's in our country. Animal fat becomes a repository of many toxic agents.

Organic meat and dairy should be free from antibiotics and hormones. Antibiotics are used to prevent disease that is rampant in the squalid conditions found in the meat industry. Furthermore, antibiotics, like hormones, increase the size of the animal.

Organic meat should also be free from pesticides and herbicides, since the animals ingest organic feed. Therefore, by buying organic animal products, you are also supporting organic agriculture.

The Environmental Working Group publishes a list of "The Dirty Dozen." These are the 12 **most** contaminated and the 12 **least** contaminated fruits and vegetables. The EWG routinely tests vegetables for pesticide residues and publishes this list on their website: <http://www.foodnews.org/walletguide.php>. This list will help you budget for the most important items in fruit and vegetable category to purchase organic.

3. Fruits and Vegetables

See above for discussion on organic fruits and vegetables.

Most people could stand to eat more food from this category. A good general rule is, eat something green everyday. Another good rule is, eat at least 1 colorful fruit and vegetable every day.

When cooking green vegetables, you should try to avoid overcooking them, as this depletes their nutrients. Steaming or quickly sautéing them is good. If you cook vegetables in water, save that water and drink it or put in soup stock. The cooking water contains nutrients too!

First choice for vegetable source is to get them fresh. Second choice is frozen, and last place is canned.

Vegetables that are especially important to consume are dark, leafy greens. Also, colorful vegetables like red and yellow peppers, beets, tomatoes, etc.

4. Protein

Sources of protein include: meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, legumes, tofu, tempeh, miso, nuts and nut butters.

There are so many meats to choose from, rather than just the standard beef, chicken and pork. Consider trying venison, buffalo, ostrich, duck, quail, or rabbit. When choosing beef, be sure to get beef that is "grass fed *and* grass finished."

With fish, you have to be careful of contamination with heavy metals and other toxins. Avoid farmed salmon, and instead eat wild Atlantic salmon or canned salmon, which is also usually wild-caught. Tuna, too, is unfortunately highly contaminated. You can keep up-to-date on which fish are the safest to consume by referring to the Environmental Working Group website, www.ewg.org, and using the “Quick Index.”

Eggs can be an important part of your diet, as long as you are not allergic to them. Eggs (along with wheat, milk, and citrus among others) are one of the most allergenic foods in our country. You should also be sure to purchase organic, cage-free eggs.

There is a wide variety of legumes from all around the world. Look to Indian Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern cuisines for ‘exotic’ legume recipes. There are many techniques to reduce the gas-promoting qualities of beans: soak beans and toss the soaking water before cooking; cook beans with mint, coriander, or seaweed.

Nuts should mostly be eaten raw (except peanuts). Dry roasted can be eaten on occasion. Seeds like pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds are also excellent protein snacks.

5. Carbohydrates

Reduce the number of refined carbohydrates you consume, and instead opt for whole grains. Bread, pasta, many cereals, and many cookies are refined carbohydrates. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, bulghur wheat, quinoa, couscous, rye, oats, spelt, and amaranth.

Use brown rice or wild rice instead of white rice.

White sugar should also be avoided. Alternate sweeteners include stevia, honey, barley malt syrup, molasses, fruit juice, and date sugar. Go easy on all sweeteners, and you will start to appreciate the natural sweetness present in many foods as they are, such as rice, carrots, and beets.

6. Fat

Fat developed a bad reputation, which it does not truly deserve. You may include “good fats” in your diet, such as olive oil (extra virgin is best), unrefined high oleic safflower oil, and organic unsalted butter.

Avoid partially hydrogenated and hydrogenated fats, as well as trans fats.

7. Courage and Variety

With a whole foods diet, you may have to stretch your palate to try foods that you've never heard of, let alone tasted! Be bold! Try buying a vegetable you've never seen before and figure out how to prepare it.

Eating a variety of foods is beneficial for two reasons. Variety will keep you from getting bored with your diet. Variety is also helpful for optimizing your nutrient intake and decreasing the chance of developing food sensitivities.

8. Shopping

Many large supermarket chains are starting to carry organic food in a "natural foods section" and in the produce aisle. Most of the time, their prices are comparable to those of local organic food co-ops. If your local supermarket does not have organic food, give them a list of organic items that you would like them to carry.

There are some national chains of natural supermarkets, such as Whole Foods, Sprouts, Sunflowers, Wild Oats, and Trader Joe's.

Many communities have local produce co-ops. Also, several reputable companies sell organic meat online. One example is Daily Blessing Foods: 1-888-862-5785

<http://organic-meat.com/>

When ordering organic meat products through the mail, make sure the beef is "grass fed *and* grass finished."

9. Cookbooks

Here are some excellent cookbooks to help in your new diet:

- a. The Joy of Cooking- a great basic how-to cookbook, for when you're cooking a food you have never used before.
- b. The Moosewood cookbooks- vegetarian recipes
- c. The Self-Healing Cookbook, by Kristina Turner. Macrobiotic philosophy and cooking.
- d. Recipes from an Ecological Kitchen, by Lorna Sass. "Healthy meals for you and the planet."
- e. Healing with Whole Foods, by Paul Pritchard. Oriental medical philosophy as it relates to food. Some recipes in the back, but mostly a food philosophy text.
- f. Cooking Kosher the Natural Way, by Jane Kinderlehrer. Traditional Jewish recipes updated to reflect (Not just for those who keep kosher!)
- g. The Garden of Eating, by Rachel Albert-Matesz. Produce-based recipes, with lots of protein and few carbohydrates.

