

HEALTHY LIVING
CAN BE DELICIOUS:

The Magic of Nutritious Foods

Living a healthy life doesn't necessarily mean saying goodbye to your favorite meals. Rather, it's about understanding ingredients and learning to balance between eating what you love and knowing what foods best fuel your body. According to WHO, in 2020, poor diet contributed to 678,282 deaths in the US. For every 100,000 people, approximately 204 were found to be leading an unhealthy lifestyle due to poor eating habits.

Deliciously Healthy Foods and Recipes

You don't have to compromise on taste when eating healthily. Here are three recipes from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, using healthy ingredients that are sure to delight your taste buds:



Quinoa Salad – High in fiber and protein, quinoa is a delicious and versatile ingredient. First, thoroughly cleanse and strain your quinoa before sautéing it. Then add aromatics such as garlic and fresh herbs and slowly incorporate halved cherry tomatoes, cubed cucumbers, feta cheese, kalamata olives, and garnish with a squeeze of fresh lemon.



Jerk Chicken Kebabs – Lean proteins, like chicken, provide necessary nutrients without the unhealthy fats found in red meats. As an alternative, try grilling skewers of chicken and colorful veggies. Brush with olive oil, drizzle with lemon juice and you'll have a flavorful and satiating meal.



Berry Smoothie – Berries are rich in antioxidants and can be a delicious part of your diet. Blend a mix of strawberries, blueberries, bananas, Greek yogurt, and a splash of almond milk for breakfast or enjoy as a healthy snack. Your family will enjoy preparing this easy recipe.

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Lettuce Show You Another Way

There's more to healthy eating than just salads. As a rule of thumb, aim for meals that are made with whole grains, lean proteins, and a variety of vegetables. Be cognizant of hidden sugars and sodium levels in everyday items and condiments. Develop a habit of reading labels when grocery shopping. Try your best to incorporate healthy fats such as those found in avocados, nuts, and olive oil for a balanced diet.

Make healthy living a delicious adventure for you and your family. Prioritize eating wholesome foods and meals and you'll be on the path toward savoring the benefits of a nutritious diet. Remember, a healthy lifestyle takes time and is achieved with consistent incremental daily changes and is not an overnight result.



Healthy Eating: A Pillar for Diabetes Prevention and Management

Diabetes, a long-term condition that affects millions worldwide, is often linked to dietary habits and lifestyle. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2020, approximately 37.3 million people, or 10.5% of the population, had diabetes.

Healthy eating plays a crucial role in both preventing the onset of type 2 diabetes and managing all types of diabetes. While there isn't a one-size-fits-all "diabetes diet", there are general guidelines that can help anyone – whether living with the condition or not - maintain a healthy diet and support overall well-being.

Focus on balanced meals: Aim to include a variety of nutritious foods in each meal, focusing on whole grains, lean proteins, and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. These foods are high in fiber, helping to regulate your blood sugar levels.

Monitor Carbohydrate Intake: Carbohydrates have the most significant effect on blood sugar levels. By understanding how to count carbohydrates and choosing complex carbs, like whole grains and certain types of fruit, you can better manage your blood sugar.

Choose Healthy Fats: Unsaturated fats found in foods like avocados, nuts, seeds, and fish can help reduce levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol and increase "good" HDL cholesterol.

Limit Processed Foods: These foods often contain high levels of trans fats, sodium, and sugar, which can lead to weight gain and negatively impact blood sugar levels.

Stay Hydrated with Healthy Beverages: Water should be your first choice for hydration. Avoid sugary drinks like sodas and fruit juices that can spike blood sugar levels.

Healthy, delicious living and diabetes management are intertwined. By choosing nutritious foods and maintaining an active lifestyle, you're taking significant steps towards preventing and managing diabetes and living a more healthful, vibrant life. Seek out partnership in healthcare providers that will:

- Assist you with creating a meal plan that suits your personal health goals, allergies or lifestyle
- Hold you accountable to regular check-ups and screenings
- Help you to keep track of your progress
- Ensure that you're on the right path to achieving and maintaining optimal health

Remember, making dietary changes is a gradual process. Consider consulting with your physician or registered dietitian before drastically altering your diet.

Whether you're enrolled in the PPO or HMO plan, contact the BCBSIL Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card, to learn more about available nutrition support resources and or to find a provider considered in-network. Alternatively, you can access information online for Blue Access for MembersSM (BAMSM) at bcbsil.com or text "BCBSIL" to 33633 to download the BCBSIL mobile app, and use the Provider Finder[®] tool to search for doctors and hospitals near you that are considered in-network. It's best to select an in-network provider to maximize your plan's benefits.

Bon appetit to wellness!



MYHEALTH STORY EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: JENNIFER GUIDO GOMEZ – FOREST PERSERVES, LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT



I always prided myself on being healthy. I got enough exercise. I thought I ate well. I was usually eating something green or plant-based. It wasn't until recently that I realized perhaps I didn't have such a healthy relationship with food or my diet.

Let's not talk about the days I'd work through lunch and didn't eat a meal until I got home. Let's definitely not talk about if a friend wanted to go out for Taco Tuesday and I skipped lunch that day, how I made up for it by eating an elote with plenty of mayo and two fried fish tacos plus a margarita. Let's not talk about how the next day I'd feel so guilty that I'd have green juice and a salad, thinking I was making restitution for my overly indulgent meal the day before. My diet was so far from being balanced.

After a short episode of GERD and educationally honest conversation with my PCP, I realized my body needs fuel — breakfast, lunch and dinner, and healthy snacks, that I mostly prepare at home. Not to mention, cooking healthy meals at home not only helped to improve my physical wellbeing, it also helped me to save money.

In this day and age when there are so many conveniences, it can sometimes be impossible to be mindful. Practicing mindfulness and eating balanced meals are now priorities. This is not only beneficial for physical wellness, it also supports my mental, social and financial wellness. And if on occasion I don't follow through, I definitely don't beat myself up.

