



Pro Kinship for Kids

# Kinship Link

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## Pro Kinship for Kids

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## March is National Nutrition Month Fuel for the Future

Fuel for the Future is the theme for 2023 National Nutrition Month. Work on incorporating foods that are healthy for you and help you get the energy you need for today and stay active in the future with good nutrition during National Nutrition Month and throughout the year.

No matter your age or activity level, making healthy food and drink choices will provide your body with energy now and fuel for the future. The benefits of eating healthfully can add up over time. Good nutrition can positively influence our health, and there are many ways to eat healthfully. Plus, no single food or food group provides all the nutrients we need for good health. It's important to learn what choices work best for you so that a healthy eating routine becomes a way of life.



### Ways we can Fuel for the Future:

#### **Eat with the Environment in Mind**

Buying foods in season and shopping locally, when possible, not only benefits the planet, but it also may help you keep food costs down. Enjoying more plant-based meals and snacks is another option. Try more meatless meals or substituting some or all of the meat in recipes with plant-based proteins.

#### **Stay Nourished and Save Money**

When prices of food and other goods go up, buying healthful foods may not feel like a priority. Yet, many healthful foods are filling, cost less overall, and help to manage or reduce your chances of developing certain chronic diseases. A little planning before you shop can go a long way in choosing foods that are affordable, satisfying and have a higher amount of nutrition.

#### **Eat a Variety of Foods from all Food Groups**

Fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy all play a role in fueling our bodies. Choosing a variety of healthy food is

important, since foods can differ in the nutrients they provide. Eat foods in various forms including fresh, frozen, canned, and dried.

#### **Make Tasty Foods at Home**

To increase variety in your eating routine, try new flavors and foods from around the world. Another way to eat healthier and save money is to learn cooking and meal preparation skills. This can help you find creative ways to use leftovers rather than tossing them.

#### **Putting it All Together**

Finding ways to include the foods you enjoy while getting the nutrients you need is important at any age. The foods and drinks we choose can be influenced by a variety of things, such as taste, cost, culture, convenience, and cooking skills. Eat right now and follow the theme for National Nutrition Month for you will Fuel for the Future!



## Smart Tips for Plant-Based Eating

Although the popularity of eating “plant-based” has grown, this term currently lacks a formal definition in the United States. In the past, plant-based was often used to describe a vegetarian diet. More recently, plant-based was often used to describe an eating style that includes more foods that come from plants, like fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds. It’s also a term that may be used in the marketing of a food, like dairy alternatives and meat substitutes. The reality is plant-based diets can be healthy, taste great, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.

### *Are there benefits to eating more plant-based foods?*

People may choose to consume more plant-based foods for a variety of reasons, including:

- Health benefits associated with eating more fruits and vegetables. Plant-based diets often produce lower cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and rates of hypertension, and Type 2 diabetes than non-plant based diets. These diets also tend to have people with healthier weight and lower overall cancer rates. These health benefits may result from higher intakes of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and dietary fiber along with lower intakes of saturated fats.
- Concerns for the environment is another reason some eat more plant-based diets
- A potential for lower grocery bills and food costs. For example, a meatless chili using dried beans is less expensive than a chili containing meat or a textured meat substitute.

### *Are plant-based foods more nutritious?*

Just because a product is plant-based doesn’t necessarily mean it is healthier. Premade plant-based foods and beverages can vary in the nutrition they provide. While a variety of nutrients can be obtained from plant-based foods, this type of eating style may

require some additional planning to make sure that you are getting all the vitamins, minerals, and protein you need. It will depend on your overall foods intake and what foods are being replaced with plant-based sources.

The Nutrition Facts Label is a helpful tool to determine if a food or beverage is the right choice for you. This is especially true for dairy alternatives. As an example, some plant-based beverages only provide a small amount of protein. Plus, if it’s flavored, there may be added sugars. According to MyPlate, only fortified versions of soymilk and soy yogurt are considered part of the Dairy Group, since the nutrition they provide is similar to cow’s milk.

These food groups may look familiar. They are the same food groups in MyPlate for all of us, but are just plant-based.

**Fruits:** Eat a wide variety of colorful fruits, including fresh, frozen, canned, and dried with no added sugars. Fruit supplies dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

**Vegetables:** Choose vegetables in a variety of colors, especially orange, red, and dark-green for the vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Vegetables such as broccoli, bok choy, and collard greens provide calcium. When choosing frozen or canned vegetables, look for products with lower amounts of sodium.

**Grains:** Eat more whole grains in place of refined ones. Some grains, such as quinoa and millet are higher in protein. Many ready-to-eat cereals are fortified with iron and even vitamin B12. Replace white rice, pasta, and breads with whole-grain options.

**Proteins:** Variety, again, is important in this food group. Beans, peas, and lentils contribute iron, zinc, dietary fiber, and protein. Unsalted nuts, seeds, and soy products are also great choices.

**Dairy:** Milk, yogurt, and cheese are rich in calcium and most are fortified with vitamin D. Choose low-fat or

fat-free options. Calcium-fortified soymilk is also part of this group.

Beneficial nutrients to look for in plant-based products include:

- ◆ Calcium
- ◆ Vitamin D
- ◆ Vitamin B12
- ◆ Dietary Fiber
- ◆ Protein

Meanwhile, aim for low amounts of:

- ◆ Saturated Fat
- ◆ Sodium
- ◆ Added Sugars

### *How to Get Started*

For a healthy eating style that includes more plant-based foods, focus on ways to add more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For example:

- Designate a certain night or nights for meatless meals
- Try substituting some or all of the meat in recipes with plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, tofu, tempeh, or unsalted nuts and seeds
- Include more vegetables and fruits without added sugars or salt in meals and snacks

### *Healthful Plant-Based Meal and Snack Ideas:*

A healthy plant-based eating style depends on variety and thoughtful planning. Many cultures offer ideas to help here.

- \* Oatmeal or millet made with low-fat or fat-free milk or soymilk with nuts and dried fruit
- \* Brown rice with black beans, salsa, cooked plantain, and a poached egg
- \* Chili made with beans and textured vegetable protein plus shredded low-fat cheese, and cornbread
- \* Hummus, carrot sticks, and pita wedges
- \* Half a whole wheat bagel with nut butter, and fruit
- \* Yogurt, layered with crunchy whole-grain cereal, and sliced fruit
- \* A cup of vegetable soup, and whole grain crackers