Food Group Classifications

Dairy

Milk, Yogurt, Cheese

What foods are in this group and why?

All kinds of dairy foods provide calcium the body needs for strong bones. Foods are in this group because they are a good source of calcium. The other nutrients in milk are also important for bone health—including vitamin D, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and protein.

Examples of Dairy

Milk
Lactose-free milk
Cheese: Cheddar, Mozzarella, String
Cottage Cheese
Yogurt
Soy and almond beverages*
Dairy desserts such as frozen yogurt, pudding and flan

*Alternative beverages such as soy and almond are in the group because calcium is added but can be low in the other nutrients.

If a food is made from milk, but is low in calcium then it is not in the Dairy group. Instead it is classified as an empty calorie food. Foods such as butter, cream cheese, and whipped cream are high in fat and low in calcium.

Empty Calorie Foods

Cream cheese or sour cream
Whipped cream
Butter
Instant cocoa (made with water)

Vegetables

What foods are in this group and why?

Vegetables all come from plants, and we get them in many forms, such as fresh, frozen, canned, and dried. Vegetables may also be processed into products like salsa or juice, such as tomato juice.

Vegetables are our main source of vitamin A which keeps your skin and eyes healthy. Based on their nutrient content, vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups: dark-green vegetables, starchy vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, and other vegetables.

Examples of Vegetables (Fresh, frozen, or canned)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artichoke</th>
<th>Cauliflower</th>
<th>Peas</th>
<th>Sweet potatoes or yams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>Tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bok choy</td>
<td>Green beans</td>
<td>Potato</td>
<td>Tomato sauce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>Radishes</td>
<td>Turnips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>Lettuce or salad</td>
<td>Salsa</td>
<td>Vegetable juice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cactus</td>
<td>Oven-baked fries</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>Vegetable soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Zucchini</td>
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</tbody>
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Almost all vegetables are naturally low in fat and high in fiber, a nutrient Americans don’t eat enough of. If too much fat is added, that vegetable becomes an empty calorie food, such as french fries made from potatoes.

Empty Calorie Foods

Pickles, olives or relish
Fried onion rings
Fast-food french fries
Potato or corn chips
What foods are in this group and why?

All fruits come from plants, but we can get them in many forms such as fresh, frozen, canned, dried and 100% juices. Fruits are our main source of vitamin C which help with wound healing and are a good source of fiber.

Examples of Fruit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apple</th>
<th>Dried Fruit (raisins, cranberries)</th>
<th>Pear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apricot</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>Peach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>Kiwi</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries)</td>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>Plum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherries</td>
<td>Melon (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon)</td>
<td>100% fruit juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citrus (grapefruit, orange, tangerine)</td>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>Mixed fruit or fruit cocktail</td>
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</table>

Sometimes when fruits are processed or cooked, fat and/or sugar is added. If too much fat or sugar is added, then it becomes an empty calorie food. For example, cherries are a fruit, but cherry pie is an empty calorie food, because of the sugar in the fruit filling and fat in the crust.

Empty Calorie Foods

- Jam or jelly
- Fruit roll or fruit snack
- Fruit drink or punch
- Fruit gelatin

Grains

Breads, Cereals and Pasta

What foods are in this group and why?

Any food that is a grain or is made from grains is in the Grains group.

Grains and foods made from grains supply you with B-vitamins, as well as energy.

To get the most nutrients for good health, it is recommended that half of your choices from the Grains group should be a whole grain. Whole grains provide more fiber which helps you feel fuller longer and aids digestion.

Examples of Grains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread, rolls or buns</th>
<th>Mexican sweet bread</th>
<th>Spaghetti, macaroni, or other pasta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagel or English muffin</td>
<td>Oatmeal or other cooked cereal</td>
<td>Whole-grain or graham crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortilla (flour or corn)</td>
<td>Cereal</td>
<td>Popcorn, pretzels and snack crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornbread or biscuit</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Granola bar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grains are naturally low in fat, but sometimes when the grains are processed or cooked, fat and/or sugar is added, increasing the fat content of some foods in this group. When the fat or sugar content gets so high that it outweighs the nutrient content, then the food becomes an empty calorie food, as is the case with cookies, cakes, and doughnuts.

Empty Calorie Foods

- Cookies, cake or pie
- Toaster pastry
- Doughnut or pastry
- Candy-filled granola bars
What foods are in this group and why?

The name of this group is unique since it is the name of a macronutrient, protein which helps build strong muscles. The most common sources are meat, beans and nuts. Meats include any kind of beef, chicken, turkey, pork or fish. Beans include dry beans such as pinto beans, refried beans, split peas and lentils. Tofu is included here too, because it’s made from soybeans. Nuts include any kind of nuts or seeds, as well as peanut butter or other nut butters. Eggs are in this group, too. As you can see, foods in this group come from both animal and plant sources.

Examples of Protein
Beans (black, garbanzo, lima, pinto, red, refried, white)
Fish, shrimp
Tofu
Egg
Chicken or turkey
Hamburger
Beef
Pork chop
Ham
Peanut butter and lunch meat
Nuts or seeds

Some “meat” foods are actually not in the Protein group. That’s because the amount of fat they contain outweighs the amount of protein they provide. Bacon, for example, provides primarily fat and is an empty calorie food.

Empty Calorie Foods
Bacon
Beef jerky

Empty Calorie Foods

What are empty calorie foods and why?

Not all the foods you eat fit into the five food groups. Empty calorie foods are not in a food group because they contain few nutrients and are higher in sugar, fat or salt.

Food Examples
Candy
Chips
Doughnuts
Candy
Cookies
Cakes
Pies

Beverage Examples
Coffee
Energy drinks
Soft drinks
Sports drinks

Condiment Examples
Salad dressing
Ketchup
Mustard
Pickles
Soy sauce
Jams and jellies
Gravy
Margarine