

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)

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|-----------|------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Artichoke | Cauliflower | Peas | Sweet potatoes or yams |
| Avocado | Corn | Peppers | Tomato |
| Bok choy | Green beans | Potato | Tomato sauce |
| Broccoli | Kale | Radishes | Turnips |
| Cabbage | Lettuce or salad | Salsa | Vegetable juice |
| Cactus | Oven-baked fries | Spinach | Vegetable soup |
| Carrots | Okra | Squash | Zucchini |



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
- Fast-food french fries
- Fried onion rings
- Potato or corn chips



Fruits

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

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



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

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



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

