Food Group Classifications

Let's Eat Healthy

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)

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
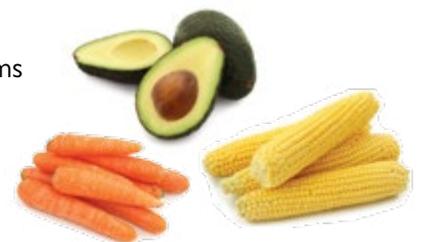
Almost all vegetables are naturally low in fat and high in fiber, a nutrient Americans don't eat enough of. If too much fat is added, that vegetable becomes an empty calorie food, such as french fries made from potatoes.

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

Let's Eat Healthy

Meat, Beans and Nuts

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

Let's Eat Healthy