

Easy food swaps for a healthier you

What if you could be healthier without making a bunch of drastic changes? No extreme dieting or starving, but just taking some small steps to improve your food choices. It is possible if you know which foods to eat more of, and which ones to scale back on. The American Heart Association recommends a few simple switches that can add up to better overall health:

- Don't cook with butter, lard, or shortening. Use vegetable oils that are high in unsaturated fats. Great choices include olive, canola, walnut, and safflower oils.
- When purchasing canned soups or vegetables, look for lower-sodium or "no salt added" varieties. Choose frozen vegetables without added salt or sauces.
- Avoid foods with added sugar, such as canned fruits with syrup. Choose canned fruits with no sugar added and/or packed in 100 percent fruit juice.
- Use nonstick cooking spray instead of shortening for recipes that call for "greased" cookware.
- When buying bread or crackers, look for those labeled "whole grain" or "whole wheat." These choices contain more fiber and nutrients than refined grains.
- Cut back on red meat by using ground turkey or chicken in place of ground beef in recipes. Turkey tacos, meatballs, or chili can be just as tasty and many people can't tell the difference.

These simple tips can help you cut back on saturated fat, excess sugar and sodium. This adds up to great health benefits without having to change your eating habits entirely.

