

Tips and Ideas to Stock Your Refrigerator with Healthy Foods and Snacks

Keeping tabs on our refrigerators is something we all can do to stay healthy in how and what we eat – without angst!

Try these helpful tips:

- Hide desserts! Keep desserts and other indulgent foods in a refrigerator drawer, so they're "out of sight, out of mind." Most of the time, healthier foods like fruits and vegetables are the ones that perish the quickest and should be kept on the refrigerator shelf where they can be seen.
- Make healthy food appealing. Keep a special topping next to a healthy food to make it more appetizing. Next time you want a snack, you'll be more apt to eat something healthy if the mixed nuts are next to the low-fat yogurt, the chocolate syrup is beside the skim milk or low-fat ranch is by the broccoli.
- Organize by "more" and "less." Divide your refrigerator into different sections of "choose more often" and "choose less often." This could be by shelf or within a shelf, always keeping healthier foods up front and less-healthy ones toward the back.
- Prepare foods as "ready to eat" meals when you come home from grocery shopping. Wash and cut up vegetables and fruits and store them in food grade containers so they'll be ready for the next meal or when you're looking for a ready-to-eat snack. Leaving them at "kid" level also makes them an easy target for children.
- Prepare leftovers as a meal for the next day. Put the entrée with the vegetable and/or other side items on a plate and cover securely for the next day's lunch or dinner. Or for a quick, healthy and budget friendly lunch, use single portion plastic containers to take your leftovers to work.
- Substitute lower-fat foods for higher-fat ones. Some examples are skim or one percent milk for whole milk; lean meats, chicken and fish for ribs, ground meat and other fattier meats. Make sure when you do this that you rotate your refrigerated products – first in should be first out so items don't get old and unappetizing, or even unsafe to eat.
- Take stock of what's inside. Once a month, pull everything out of your refrigerator and separate the healthier foods from the rest. Try to have more low-fat, high-fiber and low sugar foods than other types. Place those better-for-you foods in your line of sight, making sure they don't get pushed to the back and forgotten. Also throw out anything that is spoiled while you are taking stock to clear up space!
- Freeze fruit for fun. Freeze bananas, grapes and orange slices to make them more fun for children to eat. Next time they want a sweet snack, offer them frozen fruit instead of ice cream or cookies. These frozen fruits can also be used in smoothies.



When you are organizing your refrigerator it is also a good idea to clean its shelves and walls with a clean, soft cloth. If you have a major spill, you will want to take out the shelf and wash well, getting all drips cleaned and even sanitized to avoid cross-contamination. Make sure your food stays chilled in a cooler or on another shelf in the refrigerator while you're cleaning. Also, check your thermometer to be sure the temperature remains below 41 degrees Fahrenheit.

35 Best Foods to Stock in Your Fridge and Pantry

In the Fridge

- **Skim or 1 percent milk** or fortified soy milk.
- **Fresh fruit.** Keep at least one kind of fruit washed, cut, and stored in a clear plastic container where you can see it easily and grab it.
- **Hummus.** Dip carrots and other fresh veggies in this chickpea spread.
- **Low-fat yogurt.** Mix fresh fruit into vanilla or plain.
- **100 percent fruit juice.** Dilute it with water or seltzer. Try pre-diluted Wadda Juice single-serve bottles or Mott's for Tots boxes for car trips.
- **Bagged salad.** Look for darker greens like baby spinach or a mix of multicolored lettuces like mesclun or field greens.
- **Lunch meats** like turkey and lean roast beef.
- **Tortillas or flat bread.** They're a good alternative to bread.
- **Fresh veggies.** Buy your own to wash and chop. Or pick up prewashed, precut veggies like broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, snow peas, and celery to serve as a snack, toss into salads, or steam.
- **Low-fat cheese.** Stock reduced-fat block cheese such as Cracker Barrel 2 percent milk cheese, reduced-fat string cheese, Laughing Cow minis, and part-skim shredded cheese.



FOOD pantry

- **Whole-grain crackers.** Choose brands with at least 2 grams of fiber (and no trans fats) like Ryvita, Wasa, Kashi TLC 7-Grain, and low-sodium Triscuit.
- **Whole-grain pasta** such as high-fiber Ronzoni Healthy Harvest Whole Wheat Blend Pasta or Barilla Plus, which has extra protein and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Reduced-fat salad dressing.** Low-fat ranch makes a great dip.
- **Oatmeal.** Choose whole oats or unflavored instant.
- **Whole-grain bread.** Check labels for brands that have at least 2 grams of fiber per slice.
- **Applesauce.** Look for an unsweetened brand.
- **Dried or canned beans.** Chickpeas, black beans, and fat-free refried beans are rich in protein.
- **Whole wheat couscous** cooks just as quickly as the regular kind.
- **Brown rice.** A great source of whole grains.
- **Sweet potatoes** have lots of vitamin A.
- **Whole-grain breakfast cereal.** Aim for at least 3 grams of fiber. Ones to try: Raisin Bran, Multi-Bran Chex, or Kashi Heart-to-Heart or Mighty Bites.
- **Nuts and seeds.** Go for almonds, walnuts, and sunflower seeds.
- **Salsa.** A zesty way to sneak in more veggies; use as a topper to grilled chicken or sweet potatoes.
- **Canned fruit** that's packed in juice.
- **Jarred pasta sauce.** Add extra veggies like shredded zucchini.
- **Dried fruit.** A half-cup counts as a serving of fruit.
- **Salmon and light tuna** for salads and sandwiches.
- **Peanut butter** or other nut butters.

In the Freezer

- **Boneless chicken breasts.** Add to pasta, salads, and stir-fries.
- **Lean ground beef.** Buy 90 percent lean.
- **Salmon** and other low-mercury fish such as cod and tilapia.
- **Vegetarian chicken patties.** Try new flavors and varieties such as MorningStar Farms Parmesan Ranch.
- **Frozen veggies.** Besides the basics, pick up high-protein edamame.
- **Ground turkey.** Look for extra lean.
- **Veggie burgers** made from soy protein.
- **Frozen fruit** (no sugar added) to eat from the bag or add to smoothies

