

# Cook at Home: 8 Tips to Make Healthier Meals

Ready to cook healthier meals at home? You don't have to be a master chef or nutrition expert. But you should know a few things about healthy food choices and ingredients to improve your diet. Here are 8 tips to make healthier meals at home:



## 1. Eat more fruits and veggies

It's the easiest way to eat better and cook healthier food at home. Only 9 percent of adults eat enough vegetables, according to recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And fruit isn't much better. Just 12 percent of adults eat the daily recommended amount of fruit.<sup>2</sup> But fruits and veggies are easy to fix. They can be eaten fresh, frozen, or steamed.

6 benefits  
of cooking at  
home  
[tinyurl.com/  
y2gn2wgg](https://tinyurl.com/y2gn2wgg)

meal without it, or at least using fewer eggs. Most recipes turn out just fine using only the egg whites. Substitute  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water for each egg. A cholesterol-free egg-substitute also works well.

## 6. Heap on the herbs and spices



It's best to eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium (salt) per day. Yet most adults consume 3,500 mg or more a day. Salt does help bring out the flavor in foods.

But there's a healthier option. Use a variety of herbs and spices in place of salt. Try basil, dill weed, garlic, thyme, or chili pepper.

## 7. Sweeten recipes without sugar



Lots of recipes call for large amounts of sugar...desserts, cookies, pies. Sugar is high in calories. And too much of it can lead to a host of health problems. Cook healthier food at home with a natural sweetener. Use applesauce, mashed bananas, or pureed dates to sweeten a recipe. Honey or agave also work in place of sugar.

## 8. Mix white flour with whole-grain flour



Take a look at most recipes for baked goods, and you'll see white flour on the list of ingredients. Sure, it's made from grain. But in the refining process, the bran and germ are stripped away. That's where the nutrients are! To put some of them back in your recipes, replace half of the white flour with whole-wheat or other whole-grain flour.

Cooking healthy meals at home doesn't have to be hard. Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, and legumes, and use healthy ingredients. You'll improve your diet and your health.



## 2. Choose the less milky way

Many recipes for breads, muffins, gravy, and desserts call for whole milk. But it's high in calories and fat. Skip the whole milk, and use fat-free or soymilk instead.

67 substitutes  
to cook  
healthier meals  
[tinyurl.com/  
onuvxc8](https://tinyurl.com/onuvxc8)

## 3. Skip heavy cream

Like whole milk, it's loaded with saturated fat and calories. There's a healthier option. Use evaporated skim milk or a blend of low-fat yogurt and low-fat cottage cheese. Your soups, potato casserole, biscuits, white sauce, and desserts will be just as tasty!



## 4. Go fat-free

Put down the spoon and step away from the sour cream. There's a healthier swap for baked potatoes, taco dip, soups, pastries, and some salad dressings. Use fat-free sour cream or fat-free yogurt. If your recipe calls for cream cheese, fat-free or soy-based options are healthier.

Create  
a grocery  
game plan  
[tinyurl.com/  
yxpkat9o](https://tinyurl.com/yxpkat9o)



## 5. Eat eggs, sans yolk

If you like eggs scrambled, sunny-side up, deviled, or added to a recipe, here's what you need to know. They're high in cholesterol and calories. But that's mainly from the yolk. You can cook a healthier

## References

1. Li, Y., et al. (2018). Impact of healthy lifestyle factors on life expectancies in the U.S. population. *Circulation*, 138:345-355. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yyp2fld8>
2. Lee-Kwan, S.H., et al. (2017). Disparities in state-specific adult fruit and vegetable consumption - United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 66(45): 1241-1247. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yaele4x2>