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## What Does It Mean to “Eat Clean?”

Today’s fast-paced world and busy schedules have many people eating out or on-the-run and consuming more processed “convenience food” at home or work to save time. When rushed, the caloric or nutritional impact of a meal often may be overlooked, which can have a negative effect on our health.

One way to reverse this trend is to “clean” up your diet. Simply stated, eating clean means that you consume whole foods – those that are unprocessed or minimally refined and handled, making them as close to their natural form as possible. Think of it this way, if a food wasn’t around 100 years ago, it’s probably best to avoid it.



**So, what can you do if you want to eat clean? Try to follow these recommendations:**

- **Choose whole, natural foods.** The majority of your food should be fresh.
- **Eliminate ultra-processed foods.** (Those that come primarily in a box, can, or package.)
- **Focus on nutrient-rich foods:** fresh fruits & vegetables, dried legumes, nuts, farm-fresh eggs, unrefined grains, unprocessed meats, hormone-free dairy, and healthy oils.
- **Watch out for sugar, fat, and salt** in your food.
- **Include some protein, carbohydrates and healthy fat** in your meals.
- **Eat extra vegetables** to help you stay fuller longer. Fresh, canned, or frozen are all good options when it comes to vegetables.
- **Read labels.** Look for a short list of ingredients and be able to pronounce them.
- **Consume five to six small meals throughout the day.**
- **Avoid high-fat cooking methods**, such as deep-frying or stewing in vegetable or animal fat. Methods such as stir-frying and steaming are encouraged.
- **Shop around the store’s perimeter;** the inner aisles contain a multitude of ultra-processed foods.

Making the switch to clean eating may seem overwhelming at first, so start by taking small steps. Pack your own, clean lunch for work or school. Investigate meal prepping, where you take one day to put together your weekly meals. Then, you’ll be ready to just “grab and go.” While these may seem like only minor changes, they can make a significant difference to your health.

## Are You Practicing Food Safety?

Summertime is a blast, full of picnics and grill-outs to celebrate the warm weather. With those rising temperatures, it's especially important to pay attention to food-safety habits. Follow this checklist to help ensure you stay healthy and safe this summer!



- **Avoid Cross-Contamination.**

Chop veggies on a different cutting board than your raw meat. Wash anything that comes in contact with raw meat with hot water and soap as soon as you are done using it. Wipe down surfaces with anti-bacterial spray.

- **Wash those Hands!**

Most people do not wash their hands sufficiently before cooking or after handling raw meat. Using hot, soapy water, scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds and then rinse thoroughly.

- **Use a Food Thermometer.**

Make sure you cook your meat to a [safe internal temperature](#). Judging only the appearance of the meat isn't enough to be safe.

- **Keep Food Hot (or Cold)!**

According to FoodSafety.gov, bacteria multiply quickest in the "danger zone" – between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit. To avoid this, wait to put out hot and cold food until it's time to eat. Use chafing dishes or slow cookers to keep food hot, and don't leave cold food out past two hours.

- **Never Thaw Frozen Food on the Counter.**

Safe ways to thaw food include thawing in the refrigerator, in cold water, in the microwave, or cooking from frozen.

Source: [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

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## Should You Be Gluten-Free?

Years ago, hardly anyone knew what the word "gluten" meant, but now, many people seem either to be on, or considering, a gluten-free diet. If you have celiac disease, or gluten intolerance, then, yes, gluten-free is the way to go. But, how do you know if you're allergic to gluten, a protein found in wheat and other grains?



### Celiac Disease: What is it?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder passed down through families. If a person with celiac disease eats or drinks anything containing gluten, the immune system responds by damaging the lining of the intestinal tract, which in turn affects the body's ability to absorb nutrients. Symptoms vary from person to person, but typically include:

- Abdominal pain, bloating, gas, or indigestion
- Constipation
- Decreased appetite (may also be increased or unchanged)
- Diarrhea, either constant or off and on
- Lactose intolerance (common when the person is diagnosed, usually goes away after treatment)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stools that float, are foul smelling, bloody, or "fatty"
- Unexplained weight loss (although people can be overweight or of normal weight)

### Celiac Disease: How it's diagnosed

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms, talk with your doctor so you can be appropriately diagnosed. Your doctor may use blood tests to determine if you have certain antibodies or proteins that tend to be higher than normal in people with celiac disease. He or she also may use an endoscope to look into your small intestine and take a sample of tissue to confirm the diagnosis.

If diagnosed with celiac disease, your doctor will recommend dietary changes that could include avoiding all food, drinks and medications made from gluten.