

AUGUST 2026 WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

YOUR HEART LOVES PLANTS

Eating plenty of plant-based foods is a key part of heart-healthy eating. Plant forward eating is about eating mostly vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils, whole grains, nuts and seeds. But it doesn't have to exclude lean meat or low-fat dairy foods. Enjoy it all!



"Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." – Hippocrates

AUGUST FEATURED ARTICLES

YOUR HEART LOVE PLANTS

PLANT-BASED EATING

FOOD SWAPS

VEGAN SOURCES OF PROTEIN

BLACK BEAN BURGERS

WATERMELON FETA SALAD

MONTHLY VIDEO



ELEVATE YOUR EVERYDAY: ONE HABIT AT A TIME

Eat Local Produce

Local Farmers Markets

Check out a farmers market near you or make a day trip to one that peaks your interest.

Community Supported Agriculture

Find a CSA opportunity near you. Some CSAs even operate in the winter months. Visit this link to NOFA to learn more.

BEWELL@WORK WORKSHOP

August 6th @ 11:00am to 12:00pm

Join us and Registered Dietitian Gina Rancourt for "Nutrition for the Heart." Learn the fundamentals of heart healthy eating including simple meal prep and planning tips. Perfect timing to make the most of your summer vegetables!

REGISTER

REGISTER FOR APPLE DAYS

Lottery opens on August 10th

On August 24, we will randomly select 2,000 winners to receive an Apple Days voucher, redeemable for a peck of pick-your-own apples at a participating orchard. Visit bluecrossvt.org/apple-days for more information.

Check out our [Blue Sky VT DAYS](#) to learn more about free events for all Vermonters

Your Heart Loves Plants

Putting more plants on your plate lowers the risk of developing or dying early from cardiovascular disease.

Plant-forward eating prioritizes vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils, whole grains, nuts, and seeds. This doesn't have to exclude meat or other animal products. With so many plants to choose from, you can find a style to match your preferences.

- Sprinkle nuts on cereal, yogurt, and salads.
- Stir chopped greens into soups, pasta, and stews.
- Mix lentils or beans into ground meat dishes.
- Prepare or order a tofu-veggie stir-fry.
- Roast a large pan of veggies to last a few days.



Nourish
Your Life

PLANT-BASED Eating

The health benefits of eating more plants start with the first bite. Plant nutrients help fight inflammation, support your immune system and reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and more.



Fill half your dinner plate with vegetables and snack on veggies once a day.

Go meatless one night a week with beans or tofu, whole grains and vegetables.

Eat whole grains at breakfast, such as cooked oats, barley or millet.

Choose healthy fats like olive or canola oil, nuts and nut butters, seeds and avocados.

Meal-size your salad by adding beans or lentils, tofu or tempeh, cooked whole grains, and nuts or seeds, with a vegetable oil dressing.



BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH BLACK BEANS

1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
3 cups butternut squash, peeled and cubed (1/2-inch cubes)
1 small onion, chopped
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1/4 cup water
2, 15-ounce cans black beans
1/2 teaspoon oregano

Heat the squash in the microwave on high heat for 1-2 minutes to soften the skin, then peel. In a large pan, heat the oil. Add the onion, garlic powder and squash. Cook for 5 minutes on medium heat. Add vinegar and water. Cook on low heat for 10 minutes. Add the beans and oregano. Cook until the beans are heated through. Makes 6 servings.

Source: USDA MyPlate Kitchen

Easy food swaps for a healthy heart

Eating better for your heart doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, making some small substitutions in your diet each day can add up to better health. It doesn't require a big investment of time or money to make these changes:

INSTEAD OF:
CRACKERS
OR CHIPS



TRY: UNSALTED NUTS
AND SEEDS



Crackers and chips are processed foods with few vitamins and minerals. They're often loaded with salt, sugar or excess fat.

Nuts and seeds, on the other hand, contain heart healthy unsaturated fats that can improve blood cholesterol levels. They also contain fiber, which can help lower cholesterol and fight constipation. They're convenient to take on the go and offer a satisfying crunch.

INSTEAD OF: WHITE
DINNER
ROLLS OR PASTA



TRY: WHOLE GRAIN
BREADS AND PASTA



White "refined" breads and pastas have much of the natural nutrients stripped out during processing. They usually have little to no fiber. This means they don't help you feel full and they can cause a drop in blood sugar a short time after they are eaten.

Instead of white pasta and bread, try a whole grain option. Whole wheat pasta, quinoa and brown rice contain fiber, nutrients and even protein that's great for your heart. Eating whole grains instead of refined grains may lower the risk of heart attack, stroke and obesity.

INSTEAD OF:
CHEESY
PASTA OR
SANDWICHES



TRY: AVOCADO
SLICED OR SPREAD



Cheese can be eaten in moderation as part of a healthy diet. But many processed cheeses contain saturated fat, salt and artificial ingredients.

Instead of processed cheese, try creamy avocado. Diced avocado pairs well with cherry tomatoes and herbs as a pasta topping. Try ripe avocado on a sandwich in place of sliced cheese. Avocado contains monounsaturated fats, which are heart health superstars. It also has antioxidants to help fight heart disease.

INSTEAD OF:
LUNCH
MEAT SANDWICHES



TRY: HUMMUS AND
VEGETABLE WRAPS



Most deli meats contain a large amount of salt. A diet high in salt can lead to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. They may also contain saturated fat, which may raise the risk of heart problems.

Skip the meat and try a plant-based sandwich that still offers protein without the extra salt and unhealthy fat. Almond butter and peanut butter taste great on whole grain bread. Hummus offers protein and fiber, and pairs well with vegetables on whole grain wrap bread.

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Source: American Heart Association

PROTEIN —

find the right balance



Protein is an essential part of any diet. Your body needs it to build tissues and cells.

Some sources of protein are not as healthy as others. Animal sources, such as beef, pork and eggs, may contain saturated fat and/or cholesterol. The American Heart Association says saturated fats should make up less than 7 percent of your total daily calories. This means you should eat 16 grams or less of saturated fats if you eat 2,000 calories per day. Animal proteins also contain no fiber, and most Americans fall short of the recommended 25 to 35 grams of fiber needed per day.

On the other hand, plant, nut and seed proteins often have little to no saturated fat and cholesterol and usually contain fiber and valuable nutrients. Check out this “Vegan Sources of Protein” diagram for a list of good non-animal protein sources. Try replacing some of your animal proteins with these vegan-friendly sources.

VEGAN SOURCES OF PROTEIN

QUINOA



LEAFY GREENS



TOFU



GREEN PEAS



BROCCOLI



HEMP SEEDS



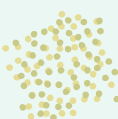
BEANS



MUSHROOMS



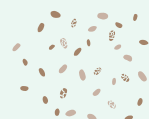
LENTILS



AVOCADO



CHIA SEEDS



NUTS



TEMPEH



BUCKWHEAT



SOYBEANS



CHICKPEAS



FEATURED RECIPE:

Black Bean Burgers



Ingredients

- 1 can of 15.5 ounce low-sodium black beans (drained and rinsed with cold water)
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice*
- 2 scallions (green and white minced, about 1/4 cup)
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro (or basil leaves or a combination)
- 1 garlic clove (peeled and minced)
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano or basil
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 4 whole-wheat buns

Directions

1. Add beans to a bowl and mash with a fork until chunky. Add the egg and mix well.
2. Add precooked rice*, scallions, cilantro, garlic and oregano, salt and pepper and mix until well combined.
3. Divide the mixture into 4 portions and form each portion into a patty about 3/4 to 1 inch thick.
4. Place a large skillet on the stove on high heat. When the skillet is hot, add oil. Add burgers and cook 4 to 5 minutes per side until browned on both sides and heated throughout. Place on a whole-wheat bun.

*Try using old-fashioned rolled oats, leftover cooked barley or Panko breadcrumbs instead of prepared rice.

Serve with your favorite toppings, such as lettuce, tomato, guacamole, salsa, low-fat cheese or low-fat yogurt.

Serves 4. Per serving: Calories: 274; Total Fat: 5 g; Saturated Fat: 1 g, Sodium: 668 mg; Total Carbohydrate: 47 g; Dietary Fiber: 12 g; Protein: 13 g

Source: What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

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WATERMELON:

Juicy, Sweet and Healthy

FEATURED RECIPE!

Watermelon Feta Salad



Ingredients

7-8 lb. seedless watermelon, chilled
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 limes, juiced
1/2 cup fresh mint leaves
1-1/2 tsp salt
3/4 tsp pepper
1 cup crumbled feta cheese

Directions

Cut off watermelon rind and chop fruit into 1-inch chunks. Place chunks in a colander to drain. Chop up mint. Toss with the watermelon chunks and dressing (see recipe below). Sprinkle feta cheese on top. Serve immediately.

To make the dressing:

In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, fresh lime juice, salt and pepper.

Serves 8: Per serving: Calories: 233; Total Fat: 18 g; Saturated Fat: 5 g; Sodium: 211 mg; Total Carbohydrate: 18 g; Dietary Fiber: 1.5 g; Protein: 4 g

Watermelon is more than a tasty summertime treat. It's a source of vitamins and nutrients and is low in calories. Watermelon is an excellent source of lycopene, which is an antioxidant that may help prevent heart disease and other health problems.

Watermelon has excellent levels of vitamins A and C and a good level of vitamin B6. All three of these vitamins are important for a healthy immune system. Watermelon also contains potassium, which can help you avoid muscle cramps and balance fluid and minerals in the body.

Source: USDA

40%
more lycopene
than tomatoes

15%
Vitamin A

20%
Vitamin C

Nutrition facts:

46 calories

0 g saturated fat

9 g sugar

11 g carbs

*Nutrition is based on 1 cup of diced watermelon

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