

Living a Whole Food, Plant-Based Life

Are you curious about a whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) diet? The T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies is here to help you get started.

The term *whole* in WFPB describes foods that are minimally processed. This includes whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), nuts, and seeds.

Many eventually give up the *diet* label in favor of *lifestyle*. Perhaps that's because the popular notion of dieting has become so confusing. A WFPB lifestyle should be simpler. It's not a short-term punishment charged by guilt. It's not a set of complicated meal plans. It's a return to whole foods, natural flavors, and optimal health.



Plant-Based 101

What do I eat?

Keep it simple—eat whole, unprocessed foods derived from plants.

Why?

The benefits of a healthy lifestyle are enormous. When you adopt a WFPB lifestyle, you can increase the odds that you will:

- Lower risk of prostate, breast, and other cancers
- Prevent, even reverse, heart disease
- Prevent and treat diabetes
- Achieve a healthy body weight and increase your energy levels
- Live longer
- And much more!

The price? Simply changing your diet. You can achieve profound health benefits by including more whole plant-based foods on your plate.

Let's break it down into what should and shouldn't be on your plate...



Whole Food, Plant-Based Guide

Yes! Eat these in abundance.

Enjoy a wide range of whole, unrefined plants. You can eat when you're hungry and eat until you're full. Strive for diversity in your meals, and include fiber-rich foods that capture all the colors of the nutrition rainbow. The following list contains many suggestions, but it is *not* exhaustive. Some items on this list may be inaccessible where you live due to climate or cultural relevance. We encourage you to use these suggestions as a starting point, but explore other foods in the following food groups! Also, choose organic when possible. For produce, please visit the Environmental Working Group's website to locate their list of the dirty dozen and clean fifteen foods <https://www.ewg.org/>.

Whole Grains & Ancient Grains

amaranth, barley, brown rice, bulgur, farro, millet, quinoa, sorghum, steel cut and rolled oats, teff, wheat berries, whole wheat, wild rice

Legumes (dried or canned with minimal salt)

adzuki beans, black beans, black-eyed peas, chickpeas, fava beans, green beans, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, mung beans, peas, pinto beans, soybeans

Greens (fresh or frozen)

arugula, bok choy, chards, cilantro, collards, kale, lettuces, parsley, spinach

Roots

beets, carrots, daikon, garlic, ginger, leeks, onions, potatoes (all colors), radishes, turnips

Other veggies

asparagus, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, celery, mushrooms, peppers, sea vegetables, squash, tomatoes, zucchini

Fruit (fresh or frozen)

apples, apricots, bananas, berries, cherries, grapes, kiwi, mangoes, melons, papayas, pineapple, plums

Omega 3 Rich Seeds

chia seeds, flaxseed

Minimally Processed Whole Soy Products

**We recommend 2-3 servings per day*

edamame, miso, tempeh, tofu

[Read more about soy here.](#)

Spices

all spices

Beverages

decaffeinated coffee, green tea, herbal teas, unsweetened plant-based milk substitutes, water

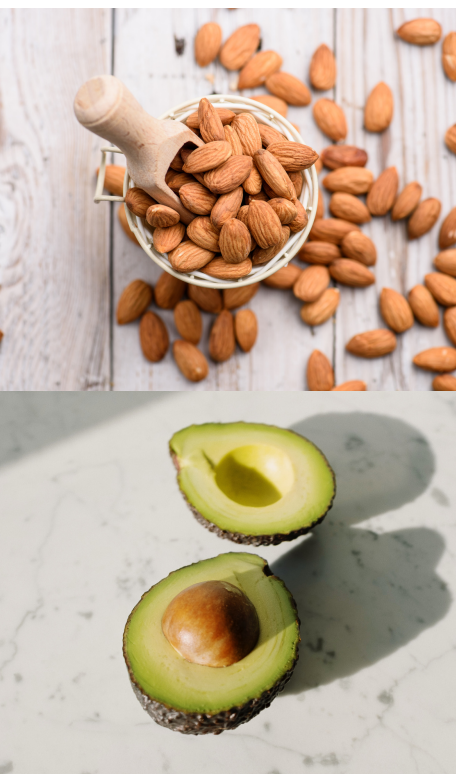


Should I take vitamin B12?

Should I take vitamin B12? This essential nutrient is not made by animals or plants. B12 is made by microbes, bacteria that blanket the earth. These bacteria are common in the gastrointestinal tract of animals and so animal foods can be sources of B12. Few plants actually contain vitamin B12: two varieties of edible algae, some varieties of mushrooms, plants grown in experimental settings with B12-enriched soils or water, and some foods made with certain fermentation processes have small amounts of active B12. We recommend a B12 supplement. Learn more from Dr. Thomas Campbell's article, "[12 Questions Answered Regarding Vitamin B12.](#)"

Occasionally. Eat these sparingly.

Many of the following foods are healthy. For example, nuts, seeds, and avocados have many valuable, health-promoting nutrients. But these foods are also very calorie dense because of their naturally high fat content. It is also easy to eat these foods excessively without realizing it. Enjoy them in moderation.



Nuts

almonds, cashews, nut butters, pistachios, walnuts

Coconut

low-fat coconut milk, raw coconut, unsweetened shreds or chips

Avocado

Seeds (except omega 3 sources)

pumpkin, sesame, sunflower

Dried Fruit

organic and without added sugars or oils

Added Sweeteners

maple syrup, date syrup, molasses

Beverages

caffeinated coffee and high-caffeine tea (without added sugar)

Checking Labels

If purchasing a pre-packaged food product, carefully read what is on the package, box, or can. Note that product ingredients are listed in descending order, with the greatest amount by weight listed first. Purchase plant-based products with only a few ingredients, which may be a good way to tell if it is less processed. Aim for foods high in fiber and low in sodium and added sugars.



No. Avoid these foods.

The standard American diet (SAD), or the Western diet, is heavy on meat, dairy, and refined and ultra-processed foods. It is very high in added sugar, sodium, and cholesterol and deficient in health-promoting nutrients, fiber, and phytonutrients. Consequently, we face epidemics of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other lifestyle-related diseases; staggering health care costs; and lower quality of life.

Meat

fish, lamb, pork, poultry, processed meat, red meat, seafood

Dairy

butter, buttermilk, cheese, cream, half and half, ice cream, milk, yogurt

Eggs

chicken, duck, ostrich, quail

Processed Plant Fragments

(these oftentimes include vegan replacement foods)

Added Fats

margarine, oils (including olive and coconut)

*Even the finest olive oils are 100% fat, meaning calorically-dense and nutrient-poor. Oil injures the endothelium, the innermost lining of the artery, and that injury is the gateway to vascular disease. Especially for those with known heart disease, adding even a little oil can negatively impact heart health.

Refined Sugar

barley malt, beet sugar, brown sugar, cane juice crystals, confectioners' sugar (powdered sugar), corn syrup, fructose, white sugar

Refined Grains

white flour (including in pastas, bread, snack foods), white rice

Protein Isolates

isolated soy protein or soy protein isolate, pea protein isolate

Ultra-Processed Foods

Foods with additives, artificial colors, stabilizers

*These are often packaged and drastically modified from their original state (think Twinkies, Oreos, potato chips, and other "junk foods"). If you're not sure whether you are eating an ultra-processed food, read the label and ask yourself whether you recognize the ingredients. Are they whole foods or only fragments of the original foods?

What is a Processed Food vs a Whole Food?

Beverages

soda, fruit juice (even 100% pure fruit juice), sports drinks, energy drinks

