

## Food Connects Us

Food is a connecting factor for many of us. Food connects us to our cultures, our families and our friends. Sharing a meal is an opportunity to learn about its preparation, who made it and where the ingredients were sourced. What's more, health, memories, traditions, seasons and access can all impact our relationship with food.

This National Nutrition Month®, learn more about these connections and how the foods you eat impact your health throughout life.

### Connect with food.

There are a variety of ways to connect with food. These include preparing your own meals and snacks and learning about how the ingredients you eat were grown or raised. Your ability to access food is also essential. Many people have a specific amount of money they're able to spend on food, which makes planning extra important when trying to eat healthfully.

#### Here are some tips for connecting with food:

- When purchasing food from a store, use a grocery list and pay attention to sales. When food is less processed, it's often more affordable.
- Learn about resources in your community that offer access to healthy foods, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women Infants and Children (WIC), and food banks.
- Visit a farmers' market to ask about how your food was grown or raised, or consider starting a home or community garden to get hands-on experience with the growing process.

Whether you have a health condition that requires you to eat a certain way, or you just want to make changes to how you eat, preparing your own meals

makes it easier to control the ingredients and their amounts. It's also a chance for children and teenagers to interact with the food they eat and build healthy eating habits for life.



### Explore the Connection Between Food and Culture.

Another way to connect with food includes learning about the traditions or history behind what you're eating. Whether a food is traditional or new to you, learning more about how and why it's prepared can be a valuable experience. It may help build a connection to the person that prepared it, teach about sustainability, or provide information about how it affects your health.

## Build the Connection Across All Stages of Life.

While the amount of nutrients we need changes from the time we're infants until we're older adults, essential nutrients play a role across the lifecycle. For example:

- Consuming adequate calcium from a young age helps reduce the risk of osteoporosis, or weak bones, as we age.
- The B vitamin, folate (also known as folic acid), is important for metabolism and is of increased concern for anyone who may become pregnant as it can decrease certain health risks in newborns.
- While protein is often the focus of athletes, older adults also should pay extra attention to this nutrient as loss of muscle mass becomes a concern as we age.

For most people, choosing food instead of supplements is the best way to meet nutrient needs. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein foods and low-fat or fat-free dairy or fortified soy milk as the basis of your daily eating routine to get the nutrients you need.



### Connect with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN).

Registered dietitian nutritionists, also known as RDNs, are food and nutrition experts who help people live healthier lives. RDNs provide medical nutrition therapy, or MNT, and can help you understand the connection between the foods you eat and your health. Make an appointment with an RDN who specializes in your specific needs to jumpstart your plan for personal wellness or ask your physician for a referral for MNT.

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**To find a registered dietitian nutritionist in your area and get additional food and nutrition information, visit [eatright.org](https://eatright.org).**



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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