

# What exactly does a healthy diet look like?



Good nutrition is important for people with MS, because it can lower the risk of developing other diseases and disorders, says Holly Prehn, a registered dietitian at UCHealth, an Aurora, Colorado-based health care system. Below is information about what foods to eat and how much, as well as what to avoid.

## **What to eat**



**Healthy fats:** Good sources of healthy fat are olive oil and oily fish like mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, tuna, halibut, grouper and salmon, which are chock-full of omega-3s.

**Nuts and seeds:** Include protein-rich nuts, chia seeds and flax seeds in your diet. Although they are high in fat, most of it is monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat, which is associated with good cardiovascular health.

**Whole grains:** Whole grains provide fiber, which promotes gut and heart health. Smart choices include whole-grain bread, brown rice, oatmeal and quinoa.

**Fruits and vegetables:** Fruits and vegetables supply important vitamins and minerals—including antioxidants that can prevent or delay some types of cell damage.

### How much to eat



**Non-starchy vegetables:** A serving is equal to 1 cup raw vegetables or 1/2 cup cooked vegetables. Eat at least four servings—approximately six to seven handfuls—per day.

**Fruit:** A serving is about the size of a baseball or tennis ball. Eat three servings—approximately three to four handfuls—daily.

**Beans:** A serving is 1/2 cup cooked beans or legumes. Eat at least three servings every week.

**Seafood:** A serving of fish or shellfish is 3 to 4 ounces—about the size of a deck of cards. Eat two or three servings per week.

### What to avoid



**Added sugar:** Added sugar—in desserts, beverages, etc.—has been linked to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, tooth decay and inflammation.

**Refined grains:** Refined grains like white rice, white bread and baked pastries have been stripped of their fiber and many of their vitamins, making them void of nutrition.

**Red meat:** Red meat is high in saturated fat, which raises your cholesterol and may lead to heart disease. Avoid processed meats like hot dogs and sausages.

**Gluten:** Gluten is a general name for the proteins found in wheat. Although there's no evidence that gluten causes MS, some studies have shown that people with MS report gluten intolerance in greater numbers than the general population.

### The perfect plate



The healthiest way to divide your plate is:

- Vegetables: 1/2 plate
- Starch (e.g., whole grain or starchy vegetable): 1/4 plate
- Protein: 1/4 plate

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See why good nutrition is important for people living with MS by reading [Weighing a healthy diet](#).