

Go on a Food Adventure

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

There's no single food that contains all of the nutrients you need for optimal health. That's why you'll notice that healthy plate models always have proportions of different foods, such as ½ vegetables and fruits, ¼ grains and ¼ protein-rich options (e.g., lean poultry and meat, fish and beans). When eaten daily, the right proportion of these foods can help ensure you get the nutrients your body requires.

Some people use a plate model and fill it with the same choices day after day. That's fine, as long as you get the nutrients you need. Others are more adventurous eaters and love to experiment with different flavors from around the world. Neither is right or wrong. What counts are balance, variety and your personal taste.

And don't shy away from being adventurous. Here are 5 food trends to keep on your must-try radar:

• **Fermented drinks**, such as kombucha and kefir, contain healthy probiotic bacteria that are good for overall health. Experiment with different brands, or make your own at home.



• **At-home meal kits** allow you to bring global flavors into your kitchen. Your local supermarket now likely stocks pre-prepped ingredient kits (think chicken, vegetables, noodles and sauce) to make a delicious dinner at home. Or check for other delivery services in your area.

• **Puffed snacks** are a modern take on the cheese variety but are made with whole grains, vegetables and flavors, such as Indian-spice or quinoa and kale. They are still ultra-processed snacks, but with less salt and fat than chips.



• **Burger blends** allow consumers to choose burgers that blend beef with plant-based foods, such as mushrooms or black beans. You get the same meaty taste with a new approach to a classic comfort food.

• **New nut butters** beyond peanut or almond butter are gaining momentum. Look for macadamia butter and roasted pumpkin seed butter.



“In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on.” — Robert Frost



Patient Portals 101

Want faster access to your health care provider? Patient portals enhance and quicken communication between you and your medical care team. Portals also allow secure electronic access to your personal health information. If your provider offers a patient portal, make the most of this valuable health tool. Portals are especially useful when you develop a chronic condition that needs regular care.

Getting started: Initially, your clinic will likely send an email giving you an option to log in to and set up your patient portal. The portal's message center allows you to communicate electronically with your provider and the office staff, who can then send you various notices, such as test results and reminders for annual checkups and flu shots. **Note:** If you've not received notification to access a portal service, contact your clinic.

Once you're set up, you can receive email alerts to visit your portal for new messages. In addition, the portal allows you to perform many basic health care tasks. You can:

- ✓ Make non-urgent appointments.
- ✓ Review your medical history.
- ✓ Request referrals.
- ✓ Refill prescriptions.
- ✓ Download and complete forms.
- ✓ Send questions via secure email.
- ✓ Access educational materials.

Some portals work better than others. Report problems or suggestions to your website providers; they want to ensure their portals are effective and efficient for their patients.

Portals can often save you time and effort. You can often resolve basic issues without waiting for office hours or returned phone calls; you can access your personal health information from each of your providers; and if you have multiple providers or see specialists regularly, they can securely post online notices to your portal.

Using a portal service can lead to better care and easier care management. Are you on it?



April is Occupational Therapy (OT) Awareness Month.

Q: What is occupational therapy?

A: OT is a licensed profession that uses everyday activities, or occupations, to help people perform everyday functions they want and need to do.

Occupational therapists determine and design customized therapeutic programs of daily activities to help patients reach their personal goals at home and at work. OT's science-based treatments have been shown to increase the capacity for patient self-care and independence and reduce health care costs.

Specifically, OT can help people regain function after an illness, injury or limitation makes it difficult to engage in daily activities. The therapy can aid injury recovery, stroke or cancer rehabilitation, speech or swallowing technique, and arthritis or disability retraining. In addition, diabetes or obesity management, support for older adults with physical or cognitive impairments, and accommodations for children with disabilities may benefit from the expertise of an occupational therapist. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Defend against cancer.

You can significantly reduce your risk for many types of cancer by practicing some basic preventive measures: Lose excess weight; stay physically active; eat high-fiber foods and at least 2½ cups of fruits and vegetables daily; don't use tobacco; and avoid heavy alcohol use. During **Cancer Awareness Month**, review the wealth of cancer prevention tips at cancer.org.



QuikQuiz:™ Fitness IQ

It's easy to confuse fact with fiction about how to get in shape. All sorts of dos and don'ts for fitness and weight loss abound online.

How much do you know about improving physical fitness?

Test your knowledge:

- Getting in shape requires long workouts.
 True False
- Exercise is not just about weight control.
 True False
- You don't need to warm up your muscles before you work out.
 True False
- Certain healthy foods, such as celery and lettuce, help you lose weight because they have negative calories.
 True False

ANSWERS:

- False** — Just 10-minute spurts of activity 3 times a day for 5 days a week build fitness, according to the NIH.
- True** — Exercise also helps reduce stress, improve mood and enhance your sleep. It also lowers your risk of developing chronic disease.
- False** — Warm up your muscles with low-intensity activities for 5 to 10 minutes before any vigorous activity. Stretch gently at the end of vigorous activity and after cool down to reduce strain.
- False** — All foods have calories. However, eating lots of vegetables is a healthy habit, and the fiber helps you stay full and satisfied, so you're less likely to snack all day long.



April is Donate Life Month,

celebrating those who have given life through organ, eye and tissue donation – and serving those folks waiting to receive a lifesaving transplant.

Every day in the U.S., 20 people die awaiting a transplant. April events include local and national activities to help encourage Americans to register as donors. And to those who have saved lives through donation, thank you for your time and generosity. Your role in this lifesaving and healing journey hopefully will inspire others to register as donors. Learn more at americantransplantfoundation.org. **Donate Life Blue & Green Day is April 17, 2020** when the public is encouraged to wear blue and green, offer events and fundraisers, and partner with local restaurants, malls, media and community organizations to help spread awareness about becoming donors.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Play It Safe With Sports**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V4tools.

4.2020