



## Eating Plan for Life

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Before you try another fad diet that's likely to fail, consider a better option:** The best approach for improved health and weight control is to develop a personal plan — one you can stick with and enjoy. Diets that are too restrictive, unaffordable or boring won't work for you long term.

The right eating plan for you should match your taste buds, daily schedule, finances and health needs. That's a lot to think about. Consider these 5 factors to help you find the best plan for you:

- 1. Does it include foods that you love?** Restricting your favorite foods may leave you unhappy and is not sustainable for long. Make sure you love what you eat.
- 2. Does it allow you to socialize?** Some diet plans are so limited that it's difficult to travel or dine with friends and family. If your diet is keeping you isolated, you need to rethink it.
- 3. Is it simple and affordable?** A sign of failure is spending too much time sourcing ingredients and too much money on them. The plan needs to fit your lifestyle.
- 4. Does it support physical activity?** Eating well is only part of the equation. Regular exercise is important for reducing disease risk, maintaining a healthy weight and improving your mood.
- 5. Does it provide the nutrition that your body needs?** It's important that the food you choose is both enjoyable and nourishing. Restricting food can lead to nutrient deficiencies. See a dietitian to ensure your nutrient needs are being met.

## Signs You Need Medical Care

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

**Worrisome health symptoms can show up unexpectedly.** When you're concerned but unsure the problem warrants a health care visit, call your health care provider's office and ask about it. Many medical offices have staff available to answer these calls.

**Generally, we see our primary care providers (PCP) for non-emergency symptoms and preventive care.** Your PCP knows you best and can provide continuous care. Examples of non-emergency conditions: persistent symptoms such as urination or bowel changes, unintentional weight loss, emotional changes, joint pain, congestion or coughing.

**For urgent problems after office hours,** learn your provider's procedure. If you can't see your provider, here are tips for getting medical care:

- 1. Call 9-1-1** for life-threatening conditions such as severe chest pain or stroke. Serious conditions include:
  - Difficulty breathing.
  - A possible heart attack: chest pain, which may radiate to an arm or jaw, with sweating, vomiting or dizziness.
  - A possible stroke: facial drooping; weakness or numbness on 1 side of the body; sudden trouble with walking, talking or vision; sudden severe headache; or loss of consciousness.
  - An injury that threatens life or limb.
- 2. Go to the emergency room (ER):** Following are some reasons to use an ER. Have someone drive you to the ER or call 9-1-1 if you have:
  - Heart attack or stroke signs (noted above).
  - Sudden confusion or a change in mental status.
  - Serious burns or a fever with rash.
  - A head injury or concussion; an eye injury.
  - Fainting or seizures.
  - Severe cuts that may need sutures; facial lacerations.
  - Fractures or dislocated joints.
  - Severe cold or flu symptoms.
  - Bleeding during pregnancy.
  - Severe abdominal pain with or without vomiting.
- 3. Consider an urgent care center,** which offers services after hours and weekends and beyond a typical primary care office. Check your health care plan for benefit details.



**Illnesses or injuries that are not life threatening but need immediate attention** can be treated at an urgent care center. Examples include fever without a rash; severe or persistent abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, flu symptoms, strains and sprains, or small cuts that may need stitches.



# Produce Primer

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Fruits and vegetables are the cornerstones of nutrition.** Do you often buy fresh produce and find that it spoils before you enjoy it? Here are some tips to keep your produce fresh and flavorful longer:

**Buy quality:** If fruit or vegetables are already soft, mushy or moldy in the store, they will spoil very quickly at home. So spend your money on hardier produce. Look for items with no cuts, bruises or soft spots.

**Store separately:** As fruits ripen, they naturally release ethylene gas. This can cause neighboring vegetables to ripen more quickly and spoil faster. Store your fruit and vegetables in separate fridge sections. If your fridge only has 1 drawer for produce, tuck your vegetables into it and store fruit in a separate bowl or basket.

**Invest in vegetables:** They generally stay fresh longer than fruits. The flavor of carrots, beets, fennel, celery, broccoli and cauliflower doesn't change very much whether they have been in the fridge 1 day or 10 days.

**Rely on the freezer:** Frozen vegetables and fruit reduce preparation time. No need to wash and chop — they go from the freezer into recipes easily. Plus, frozen produce stays fresh for up to 1 year, reducing waste.

**Room temperature:** Some items store best unrefrigerated. This includes tomatoes, bananas, potatoes, garlic, onions, squash, lemons and limes.

**Bag it:** Berries and grapes store well in plastics bags with tiny holes to release moisture, which keep the fruit fresh longer. Mushrooms don't do well in plastic bags; instead, keep them in paper bags.

**Trim the stems:** Beets, carrots, turnips and kohlrabi can last for several months in the fridge; just remove the leafy greens before storing them. You can stir-fry the greens or use them to make pesto.



“It always seems impossible until it's done.”

— Nelson Mandela

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.



## Q: Colorectal cancer screening types?

**A:** The American Cancer Society (ACS) says the best way to prevent death from colorectal cancer is to stay current with screening. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S., for women and men combined. But half of these deaths may be prevented with regular screening.

**The ACS recommends these screening options for average-risk people starting at age 45:**

**Fecal occult blood or fecal immunochemical test:** once a year.

**Fecal DNA test:** every 3 years.

**Flexible sigmoidoscopy:** viewing only the descending colon with a lighted tube every 5 years.

**Colonoscopy:** inspecting the entire colon with a lighted tube every 10 years.

**Computed tomography colonography:** X-ray to find colorectal problems every 5 years.

**People at increased cancer risk** may need to start screening earlier or more frequently. Consult your health care provider about the best screening time and type for you.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



## March 17-23 is Poison Prevention Week.

To prevent accidental poisoning, the American Association of Poison Control Centers recommends you:

1. Keep the national poison helpline number stored in your cell phone or posted by your home phone in case of emergency. Call **1-800-222-1222** or text **POISON** to **797979** to save the number in your cell phone.
2. Store medicines and hazardous materials out of sight and reach of children. Always keep these substances in original, child-resistant containers.
3. Read and follow labels and directions before you use them or administer to children.
4. Detect invisible threats by putting a carbon monoxide detector in your home.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Nutrition Facts: What You Need to Know**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/19V3tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/19V3tools).

3.2019

TopHealth® is published to provide readers with the information and the motivation needed to achieve and maintain a healthier lifestyle. The content herein is in no way intended to serve as a substitute for professional advice. Executive Editor: Susan Cottman. Medical Editor: Zorba Paster, M.D. Sources available on request. © 2019 Ebix Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in any form of any part of this publication is a violation of federal copyright law and is strictly prohibited. Personal Best® is a registered trademark of Ebix Inc. Two Perimeter Park South, Suite 160 East, Birmingham, AL 35243 • 800-871-9525 • fax 205-437-3084 • e-mail: [PBeditor@ebix.com](mailto:PBeditor@ebix.com) • website: [www.personalbest.com](https://www.personalbest.com)