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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026
Volume 53 Number 1

Keeping babies and kids healthy

PETER G. LURIE MD, MPH
President, Center for Science in the Public Interest

We've all heard the Trump administration's promise to make our children healthy again.

At the Center for Science in the Public Interest, we're doing everything we can to make sure the administration's deeds match its words. Here's a look at two worrying stories we're tracking:

■ **Botulism outbreak.** As this issue went to press, an ongoing outbreak of botulism linked to contaminated ByHeart infant formula had sent 51 babies in 19 states to the hospital.

The illness causes poor feeding, muscle weakness, and difficulty swallowing, and if not treated, can lead to life-threatening breathing trouble.

More FDA safety inspectors are needed to help keep baby formula safe.

The botulism outbreak exposes dangerous deficiencies in our food safety inspection and public health systems, which should protect the most-vulnerable.

In a December letter to HHS Secretary Kennedy and officials at the FDA and CDC, we and our partners at the Safe Food Coalition pushed for stronger formula inspections and rules.

We urged the FDA to fill the 40 percent of formula inspector positions that were vacant, to adequately fund its inspector training program, and to increase inspection of formula facilities.

■ **Hepatitis B vaccine.** In 1991, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that all babies receive the hepatitis B vaccine shortly after birth, plus additional doses during their first year of life. For almost as long, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical organizations have recommended the same.

Since then, we've virtually stopped the spread of hepatitis B in the United States and saved roughly 100,000 lives.

And although no credible studies have turned up serious safety concerns with the vaccine, in December, ACIP voted to overturn the longstanding, proven approach in favor of a recommendation to vaccinate only newborns of mothers who test positive for the virus or haven't been tested for it.

(Refresher: Sec. Kennedy hand-picked ACIP's current members, who include vaccine critics who lack the expertise to evaluate scientific evidence.)

Independent analyses have concluded that ACIP's new recommendation will result in more children becoming infected with hepatitis B, which can cause severe liver damage.

The administration's recent action on a safe vaccine—and inaction on unsafe infant formula—makes one thing clear: We're not making our children healthy again...or even *keeping* them healthy.

Peter

Photos: Jennifer Urban - CSPI (top), Syda Productions - stock.adobe.com (middle), Kaleb Lovell - unsplash.com (bottom).

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Good for you & the Earth

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT A PLANETARY HEALTH DIET

In 2019, the EAT-Lancet Commission released its "planetary health diet," which aims to feed nearly 10 billion people by 2050 without causing undue harm to the environment. In October, the commission published an update. Its bottom line: We need a food system transformation. Here's what it will take to get there.

WALTER C. WILLETT is professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Dr. Willett, who co-chairs the EAT-Lancet Commission, has co-authored more than 2,000 research papers, focusing primarily on lifestyle risk factors for heart disease and cancer. He spoke to *Nutrition Action*'s Caitlin Dow.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COST OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM

There are many drivers of climate change. Why focus on food?

WW: The food system contributes about 30 percent of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. So it plays a huge role in fueling climate change.

And even if the world switched from fossil fuels to all renewable energy, we would still breach the Paris Climate Agreement's goal of limiting the global average temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Replacing fossil fuels and changing the food system are both necessary, but neither is sufficient on its own.

If the food system doesn't change, what will happen?

WW: We're seeing it right before our eyes. When I started looking at this several decades ago, we knew climate change was happening. But we thought that we wouldn't notice anything for hundreds, maybe thousands, of years.

In fact, we're already seeing more intense and frequent storms, droughts, wildfires, and heat waves.

And those changes also affect the food system.

WW: Yes. For example, as drought increases, it impinges on food production. Or, in the other direction, as stronger and more frequent storms lead to flooding, farmers could lose whole harvests.

And extreme heat can harm crops and livestock and cause heat-related illnesses like heatstroke in farmworkers.

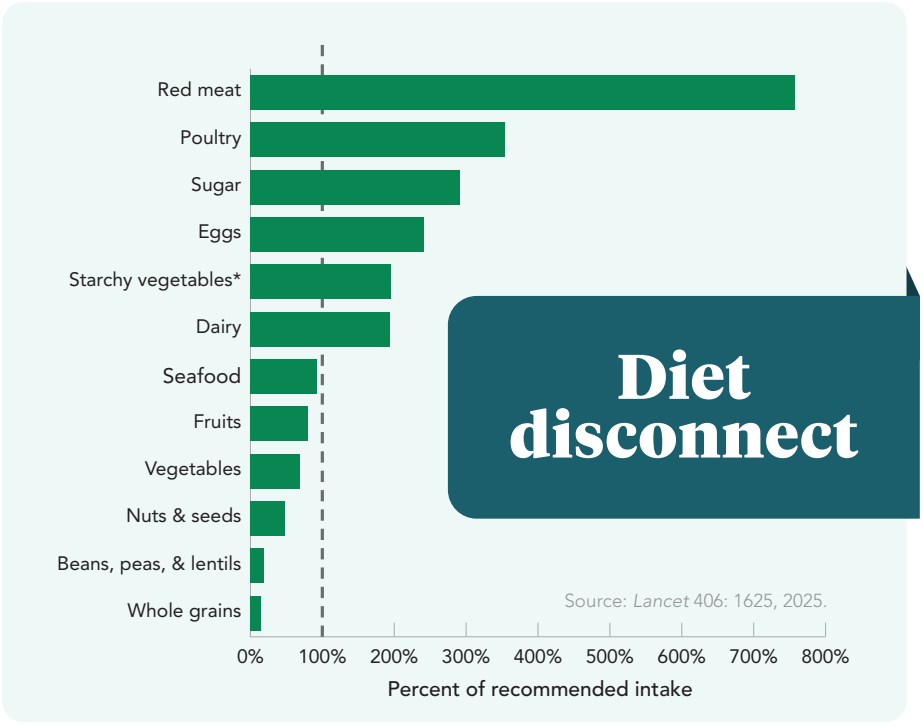
More frequent and intense storms can cause flooding that ruins crops and puts more strain on the food supply.

The food system doesn't just affect the climate, right?

WW: That's right. It also drives the conversion of wild habitats into land used to grow food, which leads to species going extinct. It leads to freshwater scarcity. And it leads us to overuse pesticides, fertilizers, and antibiotics, which causes other problems.

What needs to change?

WW: The commission did extensive modeling to figure out how to stay within planetary boundaries. We looked at metrics like how much greenhouse gas we can emit, how much cropland and water we can use,



Here's how much the average person in the U.S. eats (the bars) vs. how much the flexitarian planetary health diet recommends (the dashed line).

* Note: Most starchy vegetable intake in the U.S. is white potatoes.

and how much nitrogen and phosphorus we can put into the environment and still be sustainable.

Based on those boundaries, we were able to determine where to focus our efforts: We need to reduce food loss and waste, improve food production, and change our diets.

Why does reducing food loss and waste matter?

WW: Put simply, it means that we don't have to produce all the food that eventually gets tossed. Wasted food still requires water, fertilizer, farmland, labor, and energy, even if it's never eaten. Roughly 10 percent of the food system's greenhouse gas emissions are due to food that is lost along the supply chain or wasted by restaurants, grocery stores, or consumers.

It's impossible to get food loss and waste down to zero. So we set the goal of cutting it in half. That's still a tough goal, but it's important.

How could food production improve?

WW: There are so many possibilities. We could employ farming practices that improve soil health, improve irrigation so we waste less water, use fewer pesticides, and more.

The improvements will vary by the context. So, for example, the U.S., Europe, China, and India all use too much nitrogen- and phosphorus-based fertilizer, and there's a lot of pollution due to that. But in Africa, much of the soil is depleted, so they should be using more fertilizer, not less.

Which strategy is most critical?

WW: All of them are important, but shifting our diets will have, by far, the biggest impact on climate change.

THE PLANETARY HEALTH DIET

What does a diet that's good for people *and* the planet look like?

WW: First of all, it's flexible. There's no single form of a planetary health diet. It could be omnivore, vegan, or some vegetarian version in between.

But it's very plant-forward. It emphasizes plant sources of protein, such as nuts, beans and lentils, and soy products like tofu and tempeh.

It can also include modest amounts of animal-sourced foods like poultry, dairy, and fish, depending on your personal and cultural preferences. Red and processed meats are limited, but not eliminated.

What went into defining a diet that's healthy for people?

WW: We considered the many randomized trials of diet that had disease risk factors as outcomes and the evidence from large studies that followed people for years. The studies looked at how different food groups influence risk of major disease and premature death. Then we put all the pieces together to come up with an optimal intake of grains, fruits and vegetables, red meat, dairy, and so on. (See "6 steps to a 'planetary health diet.'")

Why is the diet flexitarian instead of vegan? Is that because some people don't want to give up animal foods?

WW: That wasn't by design. We really tried to go into this with an open mind about what the healthiest diet is.

Fortunately, it works out that this flexitarian diet is a very healthy eating pattern. And to the extent that was consistent with the evidence, we wanted the diet to be as flexible as possible. That way, we can have the biggest tent that can hold the most people willing and able to eat a healthy diet that's also good for the planet.

Is it better to eat flexitarian than vegan?

WW: For planetary health, there would be some modest benefits of going more in the vegan direction. That said, having some animals in the food system can play some useful roles, like adding nutrients to soil. But the food system should have far fewer animals than it does now.

From a human health standpoint, we don't really have good evidence that a healthy vegan diet is better or worse than a plant-forward flexitarian diet. The flexitarian diet is a little safer in the sense that you're less likely to have a nutritional hole.

6 steps to a "planetary health diet"

A planetary health diet has 2 oz. of nuts or seeds and two servings of beans, peas, lentils, or soy foods a day.

A "planetary health diet" is a healthy flexitarian way of eating—that is, mostly plant-based with a little wiggle room for animal foods.

How much room? For a typical adult, the diet has one serving of animal protein plus one serving of dairy a day. (You can swap them for other foods—see No. 5.)

1 Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains are your base. Fill up your plate with plants at every meal. Whenever you can, go with whole grains instead of refined grains or white potatoes.

2 Focus on plant protein. Aim for roughly 2 oz. of nuts or seeds plus two ½-cup servings of legumes (beans, peas, lentils) a day. "Beans" includes relatively unprocessed soy foods like tofu or tempeh.

3 Have one daily serving of dairy. That means a cup of milk or yogurt, 1½ oz. of cheese, or a typical serving of another dairy product.

4 Have one daily serving of animal protein. The servings of poultry, meat, and seafood are small (about 3 oz. cooked), and red meat is limited. Here's what *a week's worth* might look like:

- One serving of red meat (beef, pork, or lamb)
- Two servings of chicken or other poultry
- Two servings of seafood (fish or shellfish)
- Two eggs

5 Don't want beef, dairy, or chicken? Swap it. If you're vegetarian, pescatarian, dairy-free, or avoiding red meat, you've got options:

- Swap a serving of red meat or chicken for several eggs or a serving of seafood, dairy, or plant protein.
- Swap all your dairy for an extra two servings a week of poultry, seafood, or pork.
- Swap all your dairy for plant-based alternatives. *(Tip: Soy milk can match dairy milk's protein and calcium. See p. 18.)*

6 Keep it healthy. Because a planetary health diet is also healthy for *you*, it limits the usual suspects—added sugar, sodium, and saturated fat. To keep a lid on sat fat, use mostly unsaturated plant oils (see p. 11).

—by Lindsay Moyer

For vegan, vegetarian, and dairy-free recipes, go to **cspi.org/recipes**

What do you mean?
WW: If you want to be a strict vegan, you've got to get vitamin B-12 somewhere, for example. In the U.S., you can look for foods fortified with B-12 like nutritional yeast, some plant-based milks, and cereals. Or you can just take an inexpensive multivitamin supplement.

Do any cultures already follow the diet the commission recommended?
WW: Yes. When we put all the pieces together, we ended up with an eating pattern that fits a traditional Mediterranean diet. So the Mediterranean diet is sort of our prototype, which is helpful because it's been studied extensively for decades.

Are you saying that everyone should eat a Mediterranean diet?
WW: No. It's the pattern that's important: high in whole grains, nuts, legumes, fruits, and vegetables, moderate in lean protein like poultry and seafood, and low in added sugar and red meat. You can apply those principles but use foods from, say, Africa, South America, or Asia for similar health benefits.

The pattern is applicable to most traditional food systems of the world, except maybe some really cold climates where fruits and vegetables aren't available year round.

Is a diet that's good for the planet automatically healthy?
WW: No. If you really wanted to minimize environmental impact, you would feed people mostly grains and potatoes, because you can get a

lot of calories per acre of land or per gallon of water. But that would not be a healthy diet because it falls short on nutrients. And that's what we see around the world as poverty diets.

That said, healthy and sustainable diets have one thing in common: only modest amounts of meat and dairy.

How far off is the American diet from a planetary health diet?

WW: There's a lot of room for improvement. First, Americans need to increase some foods to be optimally healthy. For example, we need to eat more whole grains in place of refined grains.

We should also favor whole grains over potatoes, though you don't have to eliminate potatoes. There's also quite a bit of room to increase nuts, beans, and lentils.

And then there are foods to reduce, red meat, in particular. Americans consume several times more red meat than they should to stay within planetary boundaries.

Dairy consumption wouldn't need to change too much. Our target is about one serving a day, and in the U.S., people eat between 1½ and 2 servings a day.

We'd also need to cut added sugar, particularly from sugary drinks, by a lot. That doesn't matter much for the planet, but it does for our health.

THE DIET'S HEALTH IMPACT

Can you measure the health benefits of the planetary health diet?

WW: Yes. After we developed a method to score how well people adhered to the diet, we scored the diets of people that we had been following in our large studies for decades, and we looked at how their scores predicted death overall and death from cardiovascular disease, dementia, cancer, and so on.

Overall, people who were in the top 10 percent of planetary health diet scores were about 30 percent less likely to die over roughly 34 years of follow-up compared to people in the bottom 10 percent.

We saw reductions for specific causes of death like cardiovascular disease, cancer, neurodegenerative diseases like dementia, and respiratory disease.

That was a U.S. sample. What about globally?

WW: In an analysis that we published last year, we scored the diets of 98 percent of the world's population. And we estimated that improving people's adherence to the diet to "pretty good"—not "perfect"—would potentially prevent about 27 percent of premature deaths a year. That works out to about 15 million early deaths averted each year.

Is there anything left out of that estimate?

WW: That's almost for sure an underestimate. First, we didn't assume any benefit on BMI, though there's good evidence that the diet would help reduce weight, which could have indirect benefits on premature deaths.

The estimate also leaves out the benefit from the roughly 40 percent reduction in antibiotic use in farm animals that adopting the planetary health diet would result in. That matters because we're seeing more infections that are very difficult or impossible to treat with antibiotics. An estimated 1.4 million people die from untreatable infections every year. And one of the top reasons is that most of our antibiotics are used for treating or preventing disease in farm animals, which is leading to antibiotic resistance.

There are even more indirect benefits. Following the diet helps curb climate change, which disrupts so many aspects of human health. In some regions, for example, more heat is killing people. And as climate change affects crop yields, water availability, and sanitation, some places are becoming uninhabitable.

So all these indirect effects would add up. They're difficult to quantify, but they definitely have an impact.

THE DIET'S IMPACT ON THE PLANET

How would the planet benefit if we made the changes the commission is recommending?

WW: Food system greenhouse gas emissions could be cut by more than half, helping us stay within planetary boundaries for global warming. But we'd also reduce water demands, slow the loss of plant and animal species, improve ocean and river health by slashing fertilizer pollution, and have a major impact on land use.

How would land use shift?

WW: The problem right now is that we're cutting down forests to produce

Photo: Daniel - stock.adobe.com.

The planetary health diet can be applied to most traditional diets.

food, whether it's for growing soy, corn, or palm trees for palm oil or for grazing livestock.

In our analysis of the United States, shifting to a planetary health diet could cut the amount of land used for agriculture by roughly a third. That's because a huge share of grains and soy is fed to animals that are being raised for food.

So by cutting the number of animals we eat, we can substantially reduce the amount of food that's being fed to animals instead of fed to people. And then some of that agricultural land can be converted back to forest or prairie, whatever was the natural habitat.

Dishes that feature plant proteins—like this Indonesian tempeh stir-fry—are planetary-health-diet friendly and common in traditional diets around the world.

Does our meat consumption in the U.S. only affect this country?

WW: Eating the amount of red meat that we're currently consuming in the U.S. is leading to trees being cut down in the Amazon to make way for grazing animals or for growing grains and soy that are fed to animals. Those trees are no longer capable of capturing carbon. And when they're cut down, a lot of methane is released from the soil. Because methane is a potent greenhouse gas, it's a lose-lose for climate change.

Since the first EAT-Lancet report in 2019, the Amazon has shifted from being a carbon sink to being a net carbon emitter. That's quite horrifying.

And if you or I ate more plants, it could really help curb that?

WW: Yes. You could look at this in a positive way. If we shift to regularly having a serving of, say, nuts, legumes, or soy instead of red meat, we're helping to save a tree on the other side of the world. It's important to understand that the whole world is connected.

A JUST FOOD SYSTEM

The commission's update adds a focus on justice. Why?

WW: As the world's population expands, we need more labor to produce more food. This is a chance to take a holistic approach that addresses unethical practices in how we produce our food. Right now, there are massive inequalities in the food system, and human rights are not being met. That's becoming increasingly unacceptable.

What kind of human rights?

WW: Everyone has the right to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food. They also have the right to live in a healthy environment. And everyone has the right to decent work. But food system workers often don't make a living wage or get benefits like health insurance or paid sick leave.

In what ways does the food system produce inequalities?

WW: The distribution of burdens from the food system is very much like the use of fossil fuels that is driving climate change. In both cases, low-income countries haven't caused the problems, but they're experiencing the most extreme consequences.

The diets of the richest 30 percent of the world—particularly their high consumption of meat and dairy—are responsible for 70 percent of the environmental pressures produced by the food system.

Is the planetary health diet affordable?

WW: There is a real cost to eating a healthy diet. Beans, fruits, and vegetables are expensive compared to refined starch and sugar.

But the diet is less expensive than the path that many countries are headed down; one with more red meat and animal-sourced protein.

While cost is a huge issue, we didn't take income into account when defining the planetary health diet. If we condemn people to a less-healthy diet just because they live in poverty today, that would be an injustice.

Instead, it is the role of governments to help lift people out of poverty and make healthy diets affordable.

So we need more than people just choosing to eat a planetary health diet?

WW: That's right. Individual choice is important, but we need a culture shift around how people think about food.

We are calling for a great food transformation, which means that the food system has to change from top to bottom. It will require government actions and incentives that make this shift possible. Our future depends on it.

Quick Studies

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

A snapshot of the latest research on diet, exercise, and more.

Goodbye, metabolic syndrome?

Roughly 42 percent of U.S. adults have the metabolic syndrome (MetS). That means they have at least three of these five risk factors: abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, high fasting blood sugar, high triglycerides, and low HDL ("good") cholesterol.

Researchers randomly assigned 618 people with MetS to one of two groups. For six months, one of the groups had two individual and 19 group sessions that focused on building four habits: including vegetables at meals, taking daily brisk walks, pausing before responding to stress or opportunistic eating, and boosting awareness of foods' smells, colors, and tastes. The second group got monthly tip sheets on diet, exercise, and stress management for two years and check-in calls every three months.

Two years after the study started, 28 percent of the first group—versus 21 percent of the second group—were in remission from MetS.

WHAT TO DO: Got MetS? Give healthy lifestyle changes a whirl.

JAMA Intern. Med. 2025. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2025.5900.

Caffeine & heart rhythm

Does caffeine promote atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter, two types of irregular heartbeat?

Researchers enrolled 200 people who typically drank at least one cup of coffee a day at some point in the previous five years and had atrial fibrillation (AF) or atrial flutter and a history of AF. Before starting the trial, all had electrical cardioversion to treat their AF or flutter.

Each participant was randomly assigned to drink at least one cup of caffeinated coffee (or one espresso shot) a day or to abstain from all coffee, caffeinated drinks, and decaf.

After six months, AF or atrial flutter occurred in 64 percent of the abstainers but only 47 percent of the coffee drinkers.

WHAT TO DO: In modest quantities (the participants averaged only seven cups of coffee a week), caffeine doesn't promote—and might curb—AF or flutter.

JAMA 2025. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.21056.

Tai chi for osteoarthritis

Got knee pain caused by osteoarthritis? Tai chi may help.

Scientists randomly assigned 170 people with knee osteoarthritis to either (a) an unsupervised video-based Yang-style tai chi program—for 45 minutes three times a week—plus a mobile app (My Exercise Messages) that gives nudges to do tai chi, along with access to a website about exercise and arthritis, or (b) access to the same website.

After 12 weeks, the tai chi group reported greater improvements in pain and function than the website-only group.

WHAT TO DO: Go to myjoint-taichi.org to try the free video program and download the My Exercise Messages app. Both were designed by researchers at the University of Melbourne in Australia. For more on arthritis, see Jan./Feb. 2024, p. 10.

JAMA Intern. Med. 2025. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2025.5723.

Ultra-processed or ultra-soft?

Do people eat more of many ultra-processed foods because they're soft?

Scientists had 41 adults eat unlimited diets of ultra-processed foods with either a softer or harder texture for two weeks each in random order.

People ate more quickly and swallowed roughly 370 more calories a day on the softer versus the harder diet. (The study was funded by the Dutch government and food companies.)

WHAT TO DO: Limit softer ultra-processed foods that go down quickly.

Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 2025. doi:10.1016/j.ajcnut.2025.11.012.

Fish oil for dialysis patients?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in people on dialysis. Does fish oil help?

Researchers randomly assigned 1,228 people on dialysis for end-stage kidney disease to take either four grams of fish oil (including 1.6 grams of EPA and 0.8 grams of DHA) or a placebo every day.

After 3½ years, the risk of serious cardiovascular events (heart attacks, strokes, peripheral vascular disease leading to amputation, etc.) was 43 percent lower in the fish oil takers than in the placebo takers.

WHAT TO DO: If you're on dialysis, ask your doctor about taking fish oil. Otherwise, don't assume fish oil will lower your risk of cardiovascular disease. In a trial of healthy people, fish oil didn't lower CVD risk (see Jan./Feb. 2019, p.3). People on dialysis are more prone to inflammation, irregular heart rhythms, and other problems, so these results may not apply to everyone.

N. Engl. J. Med. 2025. doi:10.1056/NEJMoa2513032.

Stay active to delay Alzheimer's?

Exercise may slow Alzheimer's, which occurs when beta-amyloid and tau proteins accumulate in the brain.

Researchers tracked 296 cognitively healthy older adults for nine years. Among people who started with elevated beta-amyloid levels, those who did low levels of activity (3,001 to 5,000 steps a day) accumulated less tau and had less decline on cognitive tests than those who were inactive. People who were more active (over 5,000 steps a day) did even better.

WHAT TO DO: Get moving. This type of study can't prove that you'll dodge Alzheimer's, but the benefits of exercise just keep piling up.

Nat. Med. 2025. doi:10.1038/s41591-025-03955-6.

Mediterranean diet & IBS

For people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), some clinical guidelines recommend a "traditional" healthy diet that limits fatty, spicy, and processed foods, caffeine, fizzy drinks, and alcohol as an alternative to a more-restrictive low-FODMAP diet.

Can a Mediterranean diet (rich in fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts, fish, and olive oil) curb IBS symptoms as well as a traditional healthy diet?

Scientists randomly assigned 139 people with IBS to eat either a Mediterranean or a traditional healthy diet. After six weeks, 62 percent of the Mediterranean eaters—versus 42 percent of the traditional eaters—had a substantial drop in IBS symptoms.

WHAT TO DO: Got IBS? Consider a Mediterranean diet. If it works, you might not need a low-FODMAP diet, which can restrict beans, onions, milk, yogurt, apples, watermelon, peaches, wheat, and many other healthy foods.

Ann. Intern. Med. 2025. doi:10.7326/ANNALS-25-01519.

Hair straighteners & cancer

Chemical hair straighteners and relaxers have been linked to a higher risk of breast, ovarian, and uterine cancer. What about other cancers?

For 13 years, scientists tracked 46,287 women aged 35 to 74 who had a family history of breast cancer. Those who had used straighteners or relaxers in the year before the study began had 2.7 times the risk of pancreatic cancer, a 71 percent higher risk of thyroid cancer, and a possible higher risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma than non-users.

WHAT TO DO: This study can't prove that straighteners cause cancer, but the evidence is mounting, especially in women who use those products frequently. Stay tuned.

J. Natl. Cancer Inst. 2025. doi:10.1093/jnci/djaf280.

Photos: stock.adobe.com - Tyler Olson (top left), ChayTee (top right), Monkey Business (middle), deagreez (bottom).

What's the beef?

OUR TAKE ON TALLOW

BY CAITLIN DOW

In a move that has baffled many experts, a vocal crowd that includes social media influencers, alternative health gurus, and HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is promoting beef tallow. Here's what they've gotten wrong...plus tips on how to choose and use the healthiest oils.

What is beef tallow?

Beef tallow is rendered beef fat. Rendering means that the fat is melted and the solids like meat or other tissue are filtered out. (You may be more familiar with lard, which is rendered fat from pigs.) Like other saturated fats, beef tallow is solid at room temperature.

Saturated fat 101

About half of the fatty acids in beef tallow are saturated, so a tablespoon of tallow has a third of a day's recommended limit for saturated fat.

And despite what you may have heard, the evidence is clear: saturated fat isn't harmless. It increases blood levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol and raises the risk of heart disease.

Those findings are consistent across different types of evidence—from studies in animals to intervention trials in people to large "observational" studies that ask people what they eat, then follow them for decades.[1]

After evaluating all that evidence, in 2017 the American Heart Association said: "We conclude strongly that lowering intake of saturated fat and replacing it with unsaturated fats, especially polyunsaturated fats, will lower the incidence of CVD."[1] ("CVD" stands for "cardiovascular disease.")

Newer observational research supports that conclusion. In a recent study that followed more than 220,000 people for up to 33 years, researchers estimated that replacing roughly two teaspoons of butter with two teaspoons of plant-based oils every day was linked to a 17 percent lower risk of early death.[2]

Tallow or butter?

Some boosters claim that beef tallow doesn't have the same cholesterol-raising effect as other saturated fats like butter. That's because beef tallow contains stearic acid, which doesn't raise LDL compared to other saturated fatty acids (though it raises LDL more than plant-based oils like soybean).[3]

But the focus on stearic acid is misleading. Only about 40 percent of the saturated fat in beef tallow is stearic acid. Tallow contains more palmitic than stearic acid. And palmitic acid reliably raises LDL.

But why focus on fatty acids, when you can just look at the effect of the foods that they're in?

Studies that have tested the impact of beef tallow are hard to find. But in one tightly controlled study, 10 men lived in a hospital and were fed (in random order) diets that provided 40 percent of their calories from butter, beef tallow, or olive oil for three weeks each.

Unsurprisingly, LDL was highest after the butter diet (it averaged 164 mg/dL) and lowest after the olive oil diet (140 mg/dL). The beef tallow diet (156 mg/dL) fell in the middle.[4] (Those results weren't exactly a slam dunk for the meat industry, which partly funded the study.)

Translation: While beef tallow isn't as bad for you as butter, you can do

Foods fried in seed oils (like soybean or canola oil) are healthier than foods fried in beef tallow. Your best bet? Eat fewer foods that came out of a deep fryer, period.

Photos: stock.adobe.com - neillangan (top), chas53 (bottom).

Time for an oil change?

What beats beef tallow? Any of these oils. Here's what to consider when you choose and use them:

- **Extra-virgin olive oil.** It starts to smoke at a lower temperature—about 350° to 415°F—than most refined oils, but almost all home cooking takes place at lower temps. (Note: Even if your oven is set to higher than 350°F, it doesn't mean your oil or food is getting that hot.) That said, when you're stir-frying in a wok or deep-frying, the oil may get hotter, so consider using a refined vegetable oil instead.
- **Refined vegetable oils (canola, soybean, sunflower, grapeseed, etc.).** Those seed oils are good anytime, but especially if you're stir-frying or baking or you don't want the oil to impart a noticeable flavor or color.
- **Avocado oil.** Like olive and canola oils, it's high in monounsaturated fatty acids, which are slow to oxidize. That means the oil will last longer.
- **Cold- or expeller-pressed oils.** They haven't been refined, so they start smoking at a lower temperature and their flavor can degrade when heated. So it's best to use oils like toasted sesame, pumpkin seed, walnut, or flaxseed in a salad dressing or as a finishing oil (to add flavor after you're done cooking).

- **Price.** Oils like extra-virgin olive and avocado can cost four to five times more than refined vegetable oils. So there's no need to buy them unless you like—and can afford—them. (Or save extra-virgin olive oil for when you want its flavor.)

How should I store my oils?

At a minimum, store your cooking oils in a dark place, like a cupboard or pantry, not on your countertop. Even better: store them in the fridge (they'll last longer).

One caveat: Olive oil that's been stored in the refrigerator will solidify. That's not bad, just inconvenient. You can let your oil warm up on the countertop, but it may take hours to re-liquefy.

It's especially important to refrigerate cold or expeller-pressed oils—like toasted sesame or walnut—which can go rancid faster because they haven't been refined.

How can you tell if an oil that *has* been refined—like canola, grapeseed, or soybean oil—has gone rancid? If it has a paint-like odor (or *any* other smell), toss it.

better. Opt for olive, soybean, canola, or other plant oils that are known to lower LDL.

Tallow for vitamins?

Some claim that beef tallow is a good source of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. It's not.

In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's own nutrient database notes that one tablespoon of beef tallow has no vitamin A or K, less than 1 percent of a day's vitamin D, and just 2 percent of a day's vitamin E.[5]

Tallow or seed oils?

Seed oils—like soybean, canola, sunflower, safflower, and grapeseed—have gotten an undeserved bad reputation. Detractors argue that they cause inflammation and that their processing strips nutrients and introduces toxic chemicals.

That's an exaggeration.

For starters, seed oils don't cause inflammation. In an analysis of 30 randomized trials, researchers found that eating more linoleic acid (one of the primary fatty acids in many seed oils) was not linked to higher levels of inflammation.[6]

And while the oil-refining process does remove many nutrients (along with compounds that cause spattering, rancidity, and off-colors and odors), all oils contain the antioxidant vitamin E. If they didn't, they'd go rancid in the bottle after just a few days.

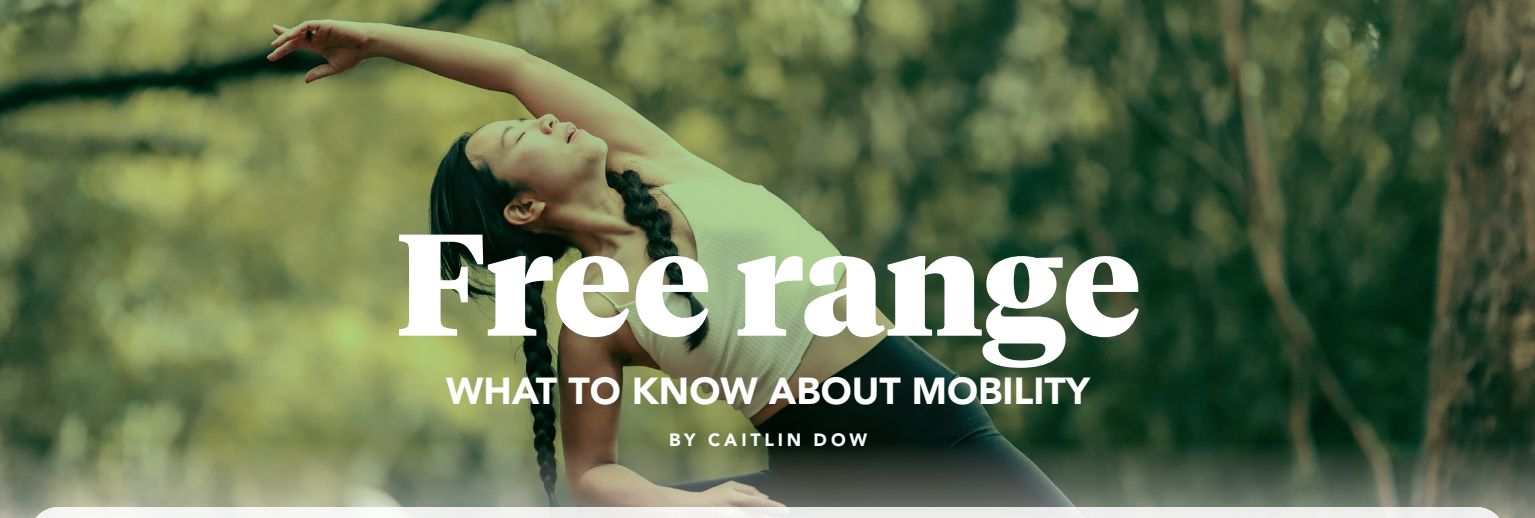
Much of the conversation about seed oils versus beef tallow is focused on what's healthier in a deep-fat fryer. Answer: seed oils. Better answer: Eat less deep-fried food.

BOTTOM LINE: Beef tallow is having a moment, but it's no health food. Ignore the hype and stick with healthier plant-based oils like olive, canola, soybean, or avocado.

[1] *Circulation* 136: e1, 2017.
[2] *JAMA Intern. Med.* 185: 549, 2025.
[3] *Lipids* 40: 1201, 2005.
[4] *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 54: 1036, 1991.
[5] fdc.nal.usda.gov/food-details/171400/nutrients.
[6] *Food Funct.* 9: 3091, 2017.

For more answers to common questions about seed oils, go to cspi.org/seedoils.

Photo: Halfpoint - stock.adobe.com.



Free range

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT MOBILITY

BY CAITLIN DOW

First you were told to do aerobic exercise most days of the week. Then they said you needed to do muscle-building moves at least twice a week. And now we're saying you need to also work on your mobility. But hear us out: You just need about 5 minutes a day, and the bang is well worth the buck.

What is mobility?

Mobility is the range of motion a joint has while you're *actively* moving it. It's the ability to move freely. Flexibility, on the other hand, typically refers to the muscles, ligaments, and tendons *passively* stretching (like bending over to touch your toes to stretch your hamstrings).

As one expert put it, "mobility requires flexibility, but flexibility does not always require mobility."[1]

How to boost mobility

"If you move, you'll increase your range of motion," says David Behm, a professor in the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada. But not all movement increases range of motion equally.

WALKING. "If you got up and you walked around the block a couple of times, you would improve your range of motion," says Behm. Why? Moving your muscles builds heat. "And if you add heat to a tissue, you reduce the tissue's viscosity." And lower viscosity means more pliable muscles.

"Walking increases range of motion because you're warmed up, but not to the same extent as stretching, resistance training, or foam rolling," says Behm.

STRETCHING. "For the last 100 years or so, stretching has been the go-to exercise for increasing range of motion," says Behm. There's no question that stretching works.

But that's not the only benefit.

"It seems to decrease injury if you're doing high-speed movements like sprinting or changing direction," says Behm.[2] You might do those movements in sports like soccer, tennis, hockey, or dancing. "But it's not going to prevent overuse injuries for people who, say, go out for runs regularly."

While it may come as no surprise that stretching improves range of motion, Behm has uncovered other fascinating effects of stretching.

"We've seen that when you stretch one hamstring, the other hamstring becomes more flexible. Or you stretch your shoulders, and your hamstrings become more flexible."[3]

Why? "It has to do with your pain threshold mechanism," says Behm. "If I stretch my hamstrings to a point of discomfort and hold it long enough, I'll be able to have a greater pain threshold. So then when I go and stretch my shoulders, I can push myself farther than I did before."

Does stretching your hamstrings improve your shoulder's range of motion as much as just stretching your shoulder? "The effect is similar," says Behm.

How long you hold the stretch might matter. In one of Behm's analyses, stretching had the biggest impact on the mobility of other joints when people held their stretches for a long time, some two to four minutes. (It's best to avoid holding long stretches before performing athletics, though, since that might modestly impair your performance.)

The upshot: Stretch your body often, but don't worry too much about which muscles you focus on. Mix it up, and your whole body will benefit.

You can improve a joint's range of motion a number of ways: strength training, stretching, foam rolling, and more.

Photos: Luemen Rutkowski - unsplash.com (top), Siphosethu F-peopleimages.com - stock.adobe.com (bottom).

STRENGTH TRAINING. "In a recent analysis of 55 trials, we showed that resistance training can increase range of motion to the same extent as stretching," says Behm.[4] Using either free weights or machines or doing Pilates all improved range of motion.

Interestingly, adding stretching to the resistance training routine didn't give a bigger boost to range of motion.

"I'm 68, and for the last 50 years, I have always stretched before I lifted weights," says Behm. "But it turns out that I don't really need to." (It's still a good idea to get your muscles warm before you stress them. You just don't need to stretch as part of your warmup.)

That's because strength training also generates heat and adds stress to the muscle, both of which reduce viscosity.

Like with stretching, strength training has even more benefit when you push yourself. "You tend to have a greater range of motion when the stretch threshold, or the pain threshold, increases," says Behm. "So if I stretch or I lift weights and feel uncomfortable, then I will get used to that discomfort and realize I'm not going to hurt myself, so I can push myself further."

Both strength training and stretching that lead to discomfort are good things, says Behm. It means that the next time you stretch or lift weights (assuming you don't go more than about a week between sessions), "you'll be able to push yourself further, because you have that higher pain threshold."

FOAM ROLLING. According to another analysis by Behm's team, "using foam rollers increases range of motion, at least during a single session, to a similar extent as stretching," he notes.[5]

You'll get the most benefit from foam rolling the larger muscles like your hamstrings (in the back of your thighs) and quadriceps (in the front of your thighs). Behm suspects that joints with more limited range of motion, like the ankle, or those with a prior history of injury like sprains may be less receptive to foam rolling.

Why does mobility matter?

"You need mobility for so many things in life," says Behm. "If you want to bend down to tie your shoes, you need some joint mobility."

"But you don't need to be a gymnast. We don't need to do the splits, but you do need mobility for activities of daily living."

"For older people, some of the biggest problems are trips, slips, and falls," adds Behm.

"If you have a very limited range of motion, when you trip or slip, you can't reach your leg out as far to rebalance yourself. Your base of support is much smaller, so you're more likely to fall."

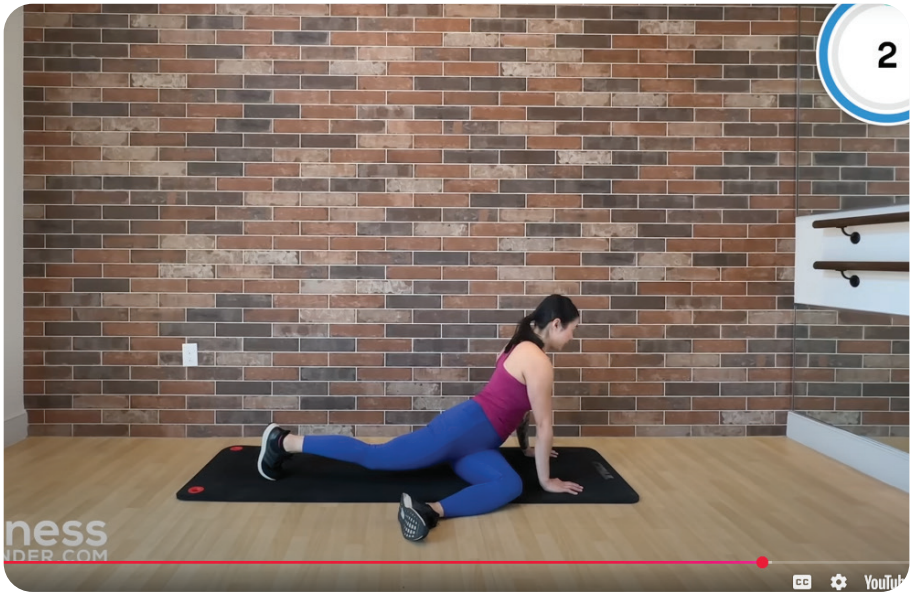
Mobility also improves exercise performance.

"If you're a golfer, you can hit the ball farther if you have a greater swing arc," says Behm. "If you're a tennis player, your serve will be faster if you have a greater range of motion."

Struggling to get into a deep squat when you're weightlifting? You may need to work on mobility in your ankles or hips.

If you're not thrilled about adding yet another activity to your routine, don't worry. "It only takes about five minutes to add mobility exercises," says Behm.

"I'm an old guy, but I still play tennis and hockey. Because I'm already very active, I don't need to do a lot of extra mobility work. I just do some warmup exercises before I get on the tennis court or the ice."



Search for mobility exercise workouts on YouTube or check out routines from Silver Sneakers or FitnessBlender.

"But if going on walks is someone's only exercise, they're not getting much range of motion," says Behm.

"It's better than nothing, but they should put a greater emphasis on doing these mobility exercises."

What to do

Get moving. Stretch, lift weights, foam roll, dance, play pickleball, jog, walk. All will improve your mobility (to varying degrees). The more you do, the less you need to focus on adding mobility-specific exercises to your routine.

[1] *ACSMs Health Fit. J.* 27: 4, 2023.
[2] *Appl. Physiol. Nutr. Metab.* 41: 1, 2016.
[3] *Sports Med.* 51: 945, 2021.
[4] *Sports Med.* 53: 707, 2023.
[5] *Eur. J. Appl. Physiol.* 122: 1545, 2022.

The Healthy Cook

Bowled over

Pop quiz: What do these three bowls have in common? Their protein comes mostly from plants (tempeh, tofu, or chickpeas), they pile on the vegetables, and their flavors are guaranteed to knock your socks off.

CRISPY TEMPEH & BROCCOLI WITH SAVORY TAHINI

I crave this sauce's umami-rich combo of soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, toasted sesame oil, and tahini. If you don't have tahini at home, you can use any nut butter.

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbs. grated parmesan
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz. tempeh, crumbled
- 1½ Tbs. tahini
- 1 Tbs. reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- ¼ tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 3 cups steamed broccoli florets
- 1 sweet potato (purple, yellow, or orange), sliced and steamed

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the olive oil, parmesan, thyme, garlic, and black pepper. Mix in the tempeh.
2. In a large pan over medium heat, sauté the tempeh mixture until browned and crispy in spots, 5–7 minutes.
3. Make the tahini sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together the tahini, soy sauce, vinegar, and sesame oil with 1 Tbs. water until smooth.
4. Divide the broccoli and potatoes into 2 bowls. Top with the tempeh. Drizzle with the tahini sauce.

TIME: 20 MINUTES | SERVES 2

PER SERVING (3 cups): calories 500 | total fat 28 g | sat fat 5 g | carbs 37 g | fiber 15 g | total sugar 6 g | added sugar 0 g | protein 30 g | sodium 450 mg

For cooking advice, write to Chef Kate at healthycook@cspi.org

Photo: Kate Sherwood - CSPI.

SAUCY CHICKPEAS & QUINOA

I love how the color of red quinoa pops in this bowl, but white or tri-color quinoa tastes just as good. You can also substitute any leftover cooked grain you have on hand, like bulgur, farro, or wheat berries.

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. ground coriander
- 1 15 oz. can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 5 oz. baby spinach
- 1 15 oz. can no-salt-added chickpeas, drained
- ¾ tsp. + ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt (any % fat)
- ¼ cup cilantro, minced
- 5 mint leaves, minced
- 3 cups cooked quinoa

TIME: 20 MINUTES | SERVES 4

PER SERVING (2 cups): calories 390 | total fat 11 g | sat fat 1.5 g | carbs 55 g | fiber 11 g | total sugar 6 g | added sugar 0 g | protein 16 g | sodium 580 mg

1. In a large pan over medium heat, heat the oil until shimmering. Sauté the garlic for 1 minute. Stir in the paprika, oregano, and coriander and sauté for 30 seconds.
2. Add the tomatoes and simmer until thickened, 5–7 minutes.
3. Stir in the spinach and chickpeas. Season with ¾ tsp. salt and black pepper.
4. Make the yogurt sauce: In a medium bowl, whisk together the yogurt, cilantro, mint, and remaining ¼ tsp. salt.
5. Divide the quinoa into 4 bowls. Top with the chickpeas and a dollop of the yogurt sauce.

TOFU & VEGGIES IN MISO BROTH

To turn this dish into a light meal, add a handful of shelled edamame to the broth with the tofu and bok choy. You can also add cooked soba noodles or brown rice.

- 1 scallion
- 1½ Tbs. white miso paste
- 1 tsp. minced ginger
- ½ 14 oz. block soft or medium-firm tofu, cubed
- 3 heads baby bok choy, quartered
- 1 cup spiral-cut or julienned carrot
- 4 shiitake mushroom caps, sliced

TIME: 20 MINUTES | SERVES 2

PER SERVING (3 cups): calories 150 | total fat 4 g | sat fat 0.5 g | carbs 18 g | fiber 7 g | total sugar 8 g | added sugar 0 g | protein 15 g | sodium 570 mg

1. Thinly slice the scallion. (Optional: For curly scallions—see photo—cut the scallion crosswise into 1-inch pieces, then thinly slice the pieces lengthwise and soak in a bowl of ice water until they curl, about 10 minutes.)
2. In a medium pot, bring 2 cups of water to a boil over high heat. Whisk in the miso and ginger. Add the tofu and bok choy. Bring back to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 2–3 minutes.
3. Divide the broth, tofu, and vegetables into 2 bowls. Top with the carrots, mushrooms, and scallions.

Photos: Kate Sherwood - CSPI.

Folic acid vs. fancy folate?

WHAT THE SCIENCE SAYS

BY JESSIE SEILER

If you're thinking about pregnancy and confused about whether you should take folic acid, you're not alone. Some companies and social media influencers claim that new supplements that contain folate are better. But are they? And what's up with the MTHFR gene?

Folate & folic acid 101

The term "folate" describes all forms of vitamin B-9, but people often use it to mean the kind that occurs naturally in foods. (Good sources include beans, peas, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, mango, and oranges.)

In contrast, "folic acid" refers to a synthetic, stable form of folate that's used in supplements or added to some foods.

Whether we're talking about folate or folic acid, the vitamin plays a key role in how cells grow and divide.

"Our cells turn over all the time," says Marian Neuhouser, a nutritional epidemiologist and leader of the Cancer Prevention Program at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle.

Replacing them requires DNA, the genetic instructions for your body.

"And folate helps make precursors for DNA synthesis," says Neuhouser.

Folic acid during pregnancy

During pregnancy, we need more folate than usual. In the early stages, "cells are replicating really fast in the embryo," says Neuhouser, "and you need the precursors for DNA to make those cells."

The first 28 days after conception are critical. That's when the neural tube, which becomes the baby's brain and spine, forms.

If it doesn't form correctly, the baby may be born with a serious neural tube defect like spina bifida or anencephaly. (Anencephaly, in which parts of the brain don't form, almost always leads to miscarriage or the baby's death shortly after birth.)

In the 1960s, researchers noticed a link between low blood levels of folate in pregnancy and babies born with neural tube defects.[1]

Since then, randomized controlled trials have conclusively established that taking folic acid supplements early in pregnancy reduces that risk.[2]

So in 1992, the U.S. Public Health Service recommended that anyone who could become pregnant get 400 micrograms of folic acid a day —in addition to whatever folate they get from their food—to prevent neural tube defects. (Current guidelines recommend 400 to 800 mcg a day.)

Why include everyone who "could become pregnant"? Because many people don't find out that they're pregnant until at least a month after conception, and roughly 40 percent of pregnancies are unplanned.

Then, in 1998, the FDA required companies to add folic acid to all "enriched cereal grains and cereal grain products." (Think flour, bread, pasta, rice, some breakfast cereals.)

And it worked. Folic acid fortifica-

Stick with a prenatal supplement that contains folic acid, the only form of folate that's been shown to prevent neural tube defects.

Photos: stock.adobe.com: Christopher Boswell (top), shurkin_son (bottom).

For more info, check out **cspi.org/folicacid**

tion has prevented an estimated 1,300 neural tube defects a year in the U.S.[3]

The recommendations are for folic acid (in supplements or fortified foods), not folate, because the randomized trials done decades earlier used folic acid.

Folate will probably never be tested. "This is a case where a trial is not always the most ethical choice," says Neuhouser.

Why? The evidence that folic acid prevents neural tube defects is so solid that it would be unethical to assign pregnant people to take something else (folate or a placebo).

Folic acid bioavailability

Some prenatal vitamins that contain folate rather than folic acid claim that folate is more "bioavailable."

"Bioavailability refers to the ability of a human body to break down and absorb nutrients," explains Neuhouser.

As it turns out, 85 to 100 percent of the folic acid in supplements or fortified foods is bioavailable (you'll absorb more if you take it on an empty stomach), while the folate that naturally occurs in foods is between 44 and 80 percent bioavailable.[4]

Translation: Folic acid is *more* bioavailable than folate.

And there's no reason to think that folate is better than folic acid because it's found naturally in foods. After all, your body can't tell if something is synthetic or if it's a natural component of a food.

What about the MTHFR variant?

The MTHFR gene provides instructions for your body to make the protein that helps you process folate.

While everyone has two copies of the gene—one from each parent—some people have variants (that is, a change in the gene's DNA sequence).

Variants in MTHFR are common and normal. In fact, most people in this country have at least one copy of one of the most common MTHFR gene variants.

Some prenatal vitamins claim that people with an MTHFR variant need to take a vitamin that contains a version of folate called L-methylfolate, or 5-MTHF.

Why? Folic acid has to undergo conversion before becoming the active form that the body can use, whereas 5-MTHF doesn't require conversion.

Sounds important...but it doesn't matter. People with the variant can still process folic acid without any problems.

"When getting the same amount of folic acid, people with the [variant] have an average amount of folate in their blood that is only slightly lower" than people without the variant, says the CDC.[5]

Ritual didn't respond when we asked for details about the clinical trial that tested its prenatal vitamin made with folate, not folic acid.

But that doesn't stop influencers from pushing supplements with 5-MTHF.

"If you have MTHFR, you need to listen up, because this has folate instead of folic acid," says one influencer, waving a bottle of prenatal vitamins that contain 5-MTHF. (Her post is marked "eligible for commission." That means she makes money if you buy it.)

"Your body cannot break down folic acid. It only can do folate." Wrong.

Supplement companies are also trying to cash in on claims about the MTHFR gene.

Take Ritual, which sells a prenatal vitamin that contains 5-MTHF instead of folic acid. (A 30-day supply will run you about $39, compared to just $27 for an *eight-month* supply of a basic prenatal with folic acid.)

"We formulate our multivitamins with 5-MTHF because it's a biologically active form," says Ritual's website.

Nice try. Folic acid is also "biologically active."

The website also says that Ritual has done a "human clinical trial" to back up its claims. But the company didn't respond to our questions about the trial, and we could find no published version of it.

Bottom line

Ignore the hype. Don't worry about MTHFR gene variants. And there's no reason to spend more money on a prenatal vitamin with 5-MTHF. Folic acid is safe, and it's the only form of folate that has been shown to prevent neural tube birth defects.

[1] *Int. J. Epidemiol.* 40: 1154, 2011.
[2] *Cochrane Database Syst. Rev.* 12: CD007950, 2015.
[3] *Morb. Mortal. Wkly. Rep.* 64: 1, 2015.
[4] *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 91(suppl): 1455S, 2010.
[5] cdc.gov/folic-acid/data-research/mthfr/index.html.

Underrated!

DON'T OVERLOOK THESE HEALTHY FOODS

BY LINDSAY MOYER

When you think of good-for-you staples, fruits and vegetables like blueberries, kale, and sweet potatoes may come to mind…or maybe almonds, quinoa, oat milk, or yogurt.

But loads more foods are healthy. Some just seem to fly under the radar. Perhaps they look funny, or they lack a superfood reputation, or they're hiding out in the freezer case. Or maybe you're not sure how to prepare them.

Here are a dozen underrated fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and plant proteins that are worth adding to your repertoire.

Frozen artichoke hearts

Prepping fresh artichokes is a labor of love, but frozen ones are a snap. Your days of trimming and plucking leaves are over.

GOOD FOR YOU: Few vegetables offer more fiber. A ½-cup serving has 5 grams, plus 10 to 20 percent of a day's vitamin K and folate, all for a mere 40 calories. What a deal!

WHAT TO DO: Defrost the artichoke hearts in the microwave on the "defrost" setting or let them thaw overnight in the fridge, then pat dry and roast or sauté.

Savoy cabbage

Don't be put off by Savoy, which looks more wrinkly than your average green cabbage. It has a sweeter taste and a milder smell, and its tender leaves make it easier to cut. While most cabbage recipes don't call for Savoy, you can usually use it.

GOOD FOR YOU: A 3 oz. serving (1¼ cups raw) has the usual green leafy vegetable perks: fiber (3 grams) and vitamins C, K, and folate (20 to 50 percent of a day's worth) for just 25 calories.

WHAT TO DO: Try Savoy sliced and quickly stir-fried, or cut into thin wedges and roasted. Its leaves are also tender enough to toss in a salad, even if you don't shred them finely like you would for a coleslaw.

Soy milk

Oat milk is having a moment, but soy milk has stuck around for a reason. For starters, it's the way to go if you rely on milk for protein: A cup of oat or almond milk has 1 to 3 grams of protein. Soy (like dairy) has 7 or 8 grams.

GOOD FOR YOU: The nutrients in Silk Original or another typical soy milk look a lot like the nutrients in soybeans. That means a nice helping of protein (8 grams per cup) and fiber (2 grams), plus potassium, magnesium, and folate (8 to 15 percent of a day's worth).

Silk and some other brands also add the calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B-12 that you'd get from cow's milk.

Tip: If you want fewer calories per cup (80 vs. 110) and less added sugar (0 vs. 5 grams), opt for Silk Organic Unsweet Soymilk instead of Original.

WHAT TO DO: Use soy milk wherever you need to replace dairy milk. Unsweetened and "original" or "plain" varieties are typically the most versatile for sweet or savory recipes and have less added sugar than vanillas.

Kohlrabi

Kale, broccoli, cauliflower… most cruciferous vegetables have already secured good-for-you status. But don't overlook kohlrabi. The oddball is also pleasantly crunchy, sweet, and mildly peppery.

GOOD FOR YOU: A 3 oz. serving of the raw bulb (about ⅔ cup) delivers fiber (3 grams), vitamin C (60 percent of a day's worth), and just 25 calories.

WHAT TO DO: The fibrous skin that surrounds the edible bulb's insides is tough, so remove it with a paring knife or serrated peeler. Then grate some into a slaw, or cut into wedges and roast.

Frozen mango

Fresh mango is a tasty treat. So why not eat it more often?

Ripening, peeling, and chopping a whole mango takes more work than, say, picking up an apple or grabbing a handful of strawberries. But (always-ripe) frozen mango chunks can hang out in your freezer until you're ready. And while many other fruits become softer after being frozen, then defrosted, mango stays firm.

Bonus: Frozen mango makes it easy to sidestep food waste. No worries that your fresh mango will go from ripe to overripe before you get around to peeling and chopping it.

GOOD FOR YOU: A 5 oz. serving of mango (about ¾ cup) is a gold mine of vitamin C (60 percent of a day's worth), plus fiber (2 grams) and folate (15 percent), for only 80 calories.

WHAT TO DO: Let the mango chunks thaw overnight in the fridge, or microwave them on the "defrost" setting. They make a great topping for overnight oats, muesli, or cottage cheese.

For an icy frozen treat, let the chunks defrost slightly, then snack on them as is or add a dollop of vanilla yogurt.

Pears

Pears can be all too easy to forget about while they slowly go from unripe to ripe...then quickly go from ripe to overripe.

But timing things right brings rewards: firm but juicy texture, sweet and fiber-rich flesh, and that mellow, floral taste.

Impatient? Buy Asian pears. Unlike other varieties, they're picked ripe. With a round shape, firm and crisp flesh, and sweet tartness, they could pass for an apple (in fact, they're sometimes called "apple pears").

GOOD FOR YOU: Pears are an underrated source of fiber. Fun fact: A medium 100-calorie pear with its skin has enough fiber (6 grams) to beat an apple or a cup of blueberries (4 grams each) or an orange or banana (3 grams).

WHAT TO DO: Store unripe pears on the countertop. Every so often, "check the neck" (the stem), as the pear growers' industry advises. They're ready to eat when the flesh around the stem yields to gentle pressure from your thumb. (Don't wait until the bottom half is soft. By then, the insides may be overripe.) To prevent further softening, store ripe pears in the fridge.

Photos (clockwise from top left): stock.adobe.com: ahirao, Enlightened Media, Brent Hofacker, Pixel-Shot.

Rutabagas and turnips

Rutabagas and turnips aren't easy on the eyes. They look a bit like oversized purple and yellow potatoes.

Odds are, you walk past both roots at the market. But did you know that they can stand in for mashed, baked, or roasted potatoes when you want a lighter, less starchy twist on comfort food? (White potatoes have 140 calories per cup, compared to 50 for rutabagas and 35 for turnips.)

What about taste? Turnips have a distinctive tang, which mellows when you cook them. Rutabagas—a cross between turnips and cabbage—have less tang and more sweetness.

GOOD FOR YOU: A ½-cup serving of either offers fiber (2 grams), vitamin C (10 to 20 percent of a day's worth), and no more than 25 calories.

WHAT TO DO: Peel a pound of rutabagas or turnips and chop them into chunks. Toss with olive oil and salt, then roast on a sheet pan in a 400° F oven until caramelized and tender (about 20-40 minutes), stirring halfway.

Unsweetened shredded wheat

The cereal aisle is full of showy marketing claims, but modest shredded wheat deserves to stand out.

Many unsweetened varieties like Whole Foods 365 Bite-Sized Wheat Squares and Mom's Best Toasted Wheatfuls have just two ingredients: whole wheat and "mixed tocopherols" (that's vitamin E, which prolongs freshness).

Because whole wheat has more fiber than brown rice or corn, cereals like those two are among the best ways to rack up fiber at breakfast. (Oatmeal is also a good bet.)

GOOD FOR YOU: Expect roughly 7 grams of fiber and 7 grams of protein in a 2 oz. serving. Bonus: The cereal's whole wheat is also a reliable source of zinc and magnesium (roughly 15 to 20 percent of a day's worth of each).

WHAT TO DO: If plain shredded wheat doesn't do it for your tastebuds, don't jump straight to Frosted Mini-Wheats or any of its lookalikes, which typically have 12 grams of added sugar per serving. Instead, split the difference with a less-sweet shredded wheat like Kashi Organic Autumn Wheat, which has just 7 grams.

Rye crispbread crackers

Rye crispbread crackers originated in Nordic countries like Sweden and Finland, so they're not a household name in the U.S. like, say, Triscuits or Wheat Thins. But if you want a cracker that's high in fiber, go for rye. (Whole rye has even more fiber than whole wheat.) Bonus: Crispbreads tend to be less salty than your average cracker.

GOOD FOR YOU: The best crispbreads are made with just a few main ingredients: rye flour, salt, and maybe yeast. Some also sprinkle in seeds for texture or crunch. Wasa Whole Grain, Wasa Light Rye, Wasa Thin Rye, and Finn Crisp Original or Caraway all fit the bill.

And a nice bill it is. Two Wasa Whole Grain crispbreads, for example, have an ample 6 grams of fiber, vs. 3 grams in a serving of Wheat Thins. Wasa also has half as much sodium and no added sugar (Wheat Thins have 4 grams).

WHAT TO DO: Most crispbreads are thick enough to let you spread on toppings like hummus, cottage cheese, mashed avocado, labneh (strained yogurt spread), or baba ghanoush (roasted eggplant dip).

Kiwi

While a green kiwi's fuzzy brown coat is perfectly edible, it looks less than appetizing. If you want to dodge it, just cut the fruit in half across the width and scoop out the flesh with a spoon. Or reach for a gold kiwi, whose smoother and less fuzzy skin makes it easier to eat unpeeled. (It has sweeter flesh and fewer seeds, too.)

GOOD FOR YOU: A serving of two green kiwis has nearly 1½ days' worth of vitamin C. Two golds have twice that much! Both supply 8 to 15 percent of a day's potassium, folate, and fiber. Golds also have 10 percent of a day's vitamin K, while greens have half a day's worth. That's all for 100 calories.

WHAT TO DO: Let kiwis ripen on the counter until they yield to slight pressure, like a ripe avocado. You can refrigerate ripe kiwis for up to two weeks. Eat as is, or toss slices of the tart, tangy fruit into a sweet bowl of yogurt or a savory green salad.

Photos (clockwise from top left): stock.adobe.com: Elena, nblxer, Christian, Thongchai.

Whole heads of lettuce

You can't beat the ease of bagged or boxed prewashed salad greens. And we've all heard that you get more vitamins and minerals by eating dark green leafy vegetables like kale, spring mix, and spinach instead of, say, iceberg. That's not wrong, but it's no reason to pass up all lettuce.

Lettuces like romaine, green leaf, and butter (aka Bibb or Boston) are no slouches in the nutrient department. Plus, because they're often sold in whole heads that haven't been washed or trimmed, they're likely to cost less and stay fresh for longer (goodbye, slimy spring mix!).

GOOD FOR YOU: A generous 3 oz. serving of romaine, green leaf, or butter lettuce—about 1½ to 2¼ cups—is jam-packed. We're talking about a gram or two of fiber, plus folate (8 to 30 percent of a day's worth), vitamin A (15 to 40 percent), and vitamin K (70 to 90 percent).

WHAT TO DO: To prolong freshness, don't wash or trim lettuce until you're ready to eat it. And if you invest in a salad spinner, you'll make drying the leaves a cinch.

Butter beans

If you've heard that butter beans are in fact lima beans—and you're no fan of limas—don't worry. The bean may be the same, but its age, size, color, and texture are not. Young lima beans are smaller, green, and starchy. Mature butter beans are large, beige, and creamy. Talk about aging well!

GOOD FOR YOU: Like other legumes, butter beans offer more fiber (7 grams per ½ cup) than you'll find in a serving of most foods. You'll also score 7 grams of protein, 20 percent of a day's worth of folate, and 10 percent for iron, magnesium, and potassium, all for 110 calories.

WHAT TO DO: Drain and rinse canned butter beans (or start from scratch—see cspi.org/drybeans), then add to soups, pan-fry until crispy, or toss with roasted vegetables.

For more foods and WHAT TO DO tips, go to cspi.org/underrated

Culture wars

WHICH YOGURTS ARE BEST?

BY LINDSAY MOYER & MARLENA KOCH

From newbies like ultra-filtered yogurt to oat-milk skyr, the yogurt aisle shows no signs of slowing down. But some things don't change. Plain beats sugary. Lowfat beats whole-fat. Soy trumps coconut. Here's a closer look.

1 You can't beat plain. Plain yogurt is a no-brainer. You can dodge added sugar *and* save money, since a big tub of plain yogurt often costs less per serving than a single flavored yogurt. And you don't have to worry about the risky artificial sweeteners or food dyes that crop up in some flavored yogurts.

If you don't love the tangy taste of plain, add some fruit. Or help train your taste buds by mixing plain yogurt with vanilla yogurt. As you adjust to the tang, bump up the plain.

2 Keep a lid on sugar. Our added-sugar limit for Best Bites stands firm at 0 grams, but Honorable Mentions can have some. We drew the line at no more than 8 grams—about 2 teaspoons—per serving. Many flavored yogurts add more.

Some flavored yogurts slash the sugar by using low-calorie sweeteners like stevia extract, monk fruit extract, or allulose (see p. 22). Those are fine, but we didn't award Best Bites or Honorable Mentions to any yogurts that add sucralose or acesulfame potassium, two low-calorie sweeteners that we rate as "Avoid" (see chemicalcuisine.org).

We also would have disqualified yogurts sweetened with aspartame, but we didn't find any.

3 Pick lowfat (2%) or nonfat (0%). Compared to full-fat, lower-fat yogurt has less unhealthy saturated fat and fewer calories, but at least as much protein and calcium.

So our sat fat limit for Best Bites and Honorable Mentions (2.5 grams per serving) lets in lowfat (2%) and nonfat (0%) yogurts but not whole-milk (4% or 5%) yogurts.

4 Greek, Icelandic, ultra-filtered, or regular? Any kind of yogurt can win a Best Bite. Where they differ: taste, texture, protein, and calcium. Go with what matters most to you.

- **Taste:** Regular yogurt has a few more grams of naturally occurring sugar than Greek, so it has less tang.
- **Texture:** Icelandic skyr and Greek are strained, so they're thicker than regular yogurt. Yogurts made from ultra-filtered milk are also thicker.
- **Protein:** Greek, Icelandic, and ultra-filtered have roughly two to three times as much protein as regular.
- **Calcium:** Regular yogurt has slightly more calcium than Greek or Icelandic. Ultra-filtered yogurts vary.

We only gave plant-based yogurts Best Bites or Honorable Mentions if they had as much protein (5 grams) and calcium (8 percent of the Daily Value) as a serving of lowfat dairy yogurt.

Fage Total 2%
Our favorite plain: smooth, creamy, and with just the right amount of tang.

Oikos Pro
Its texture comes closer to pudding than anything else you'll find in a yogurt cup. Mmm.

Icelandic Provisions Thick & Creamy Skyr
You can't go wrong with fluffy skyr in flavors like Peach & Cloudberry.

Siggi's Fat Free Skyr
Siggi's is a less-sugar standby. None of its fat free skyrs top 7 grams of added sugar.

Chobani 20G Protein
Looking for a flavored yogurt with no added sugar and no lactose? Look no further.

Photos: fortyforks - stock.adobe.com (top), NIQ Product Explorer (Chobani), Marlena Koch - CSPI (all others)

Slashing sugar

Too Good adds no sugar, just stevia.

We found plenty of flavored yogurts that have just a little added sugar or none. The mixed bag ranges from sorta- to super-sweet.

The sorta-sweets simply add less sugar. The super-sweets replace all their added sugar with stevia extract, monk fruit extract, or allulose. (Stevia and monk fruit extracts are sweeter than regular sugar.) Some people detect a slightly bitter aftertaste from those sweeteners, while others don't. Follow your taste buds.

■ **Sorta-sweets.** For a flavored Honorable Mention that adds less sugar than most yogurts, try Chobani Less Sugar Greek, Fage Total 2% Greek (except the Honey variety), Icelandic Provisions Thick & Creamy Skyr, or Siggi's Fat Free or Lowfat Skyr.

■ **Super-sweets.** For a flavored Best Bite that replaces all its added sugar with low-calorie sweeteners, try Chobani Zero Sugar Greek or 20G Protein Greek, Oikos Pro or Triple Zero Greek, or Too Good Zero Sugar, Blended, or Fruit on the Bottom.

Pushing protein

A thick, drinkable protein yogurt.

Yogurt tubs and drinks that deliver a meal-size dose of protein are made of ultra-filtered milk plus whey protein (like Oikos Pro) or are simply a larger serving of Greek yogurt (like Chobani 30G).

They're healthy, but don't fall for their hype.

"Complete protein," says an Oikos Pro bottle. "23g of protein to help support muscles."

Yes, the protein in Oikos—or *any* dairy yogurt—is "complete." (That means it contains all the essential amino acids your body can't make.) But that doesn't mean other protein sources aren't good. While the protein in most plants falls short, if you eat a variety of plant foods (as most of us do), you end up getting what you need.

As for "help support muscles," only strength training (plus eating enough protein) can build new muscle. Extra protein alone won't do it. And most U.S. adults already eat enough protein.

Picking plant-based

A good oat yogurt, but it's a little low in calcium.

It's hard to find the holy grail of plant-based yogurts—one that tastes great, is low in saturated fat, and has roughly as much protein and calcium as dairy yogurt.

We found only a handful of plant-based Best Bites and Honorable Mentions, so if you're vegan or dairy-free, it makes sense to try some that were near misses.

But if you're just trying to eat a diet that's low in animal foods to lighten your impact on the planet (see p. 3), you could buy *milk* that's plant-based and *yogurt* that's dairy.

■ **Coconut.** Most plant-based coconut yogurts have more saturated fat than whole-milk dairy yogurt. For example, a 5.3 oz. tub of Silk Greek Style Coconutmilk has 10 grams (half a day's worth). A 6 oz. serving of Culina Plain & Simple hits 21 grams (gulp!).

Vegans don't eat (saturated-fat-rich) cheese, butter, whole milk, or red meat, so they may have more wiggle room for sat fat from coconut. If so, it's a whole lot easier to squeeze in, say, 8 grams from Siggi's Plant-based Coconut Blend than 10 to 20 grams from another brand.

■ **Almond.** Compared to coconut, almond-based yogurts like Silk Almondmilk and Kite Hill are lower in sat fat, higher in healthy fat, and often higher in protein. (Kite Hill adds some soy protein isolate to its Greek Style yogurts.)

Unfortunately, our taste testers noted a bitter aftertaste in Kite Hill. Silk tastes somewhat better, though it's a bit chalky (and most varieties are sugary).

■ **Soy.** Silk Soymilk yogurts have a lot to like. As with almond yogurt, you don't have to worry about unhealthy fat. And the protein (6 grams) and calcium (15 percent of a day's worth) are on target. Plus, soy comes closer to the taste of dairy than many others.

It's a pity that Silk's plain soy yogurt (an Honorable Mention) can be hard to find in many supermarkets. The flavored varieties add more sugar (11 or 12 grams).

■ **Oat.** Icelandic Provisions Oatmilk Skyr doesn't get an Honorable Mention, but it comes darn close. The 5 oz. tubs stay within our sat fat limit, the added sugar just misses, and the protein hits 12 grams (thanks to added pea protein). But the calcium falls a little short.

Photos: Marlena Koch - CSPI.

Cream of the crop

Best Bites (✔✔) have no added sugar. **Honorable Mentions** (✔) can have up to 8 grams per serving. Both have no more than 2.5 grams of saturated fat and no sucralose, acesulfame potassium, or food dyes. (Yogurt lines that contain one or more of those additives in at least one flavor have a • symbol.)

Plant-based yogurts only get Best Bites or Honorable Mentions if a serving matches or exceeds dairy yogurt's 5 grams of protein and 8% of the Daily Value (DV) for calcium.

Yogurts are ranked from least to most saturated fat and added sugar, then most to least protein and calcium.

DAIRY

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Added Sugar (g)	Protein (g)	Calcium (%DV)
Plain—Greek, Skyr, ultra-filtered *(6 oz.)*					
✔✔ Oikos Pro	160	0	0	25	20
✔✔ Siggi's 0% Skyr	100	0	0	19	15
✔✔ Fage Total 0% Greek	90	0	0	18	15
✔✔ Oikos Triple Zero Greek	100	0	0	18	15
✔✔ Chobani Nonfat Greek	90	0	0	16	15
✔✔ Stonyfield Nonfat Greek	90	0	0	16	15
✔✔ Icelandic Provisions Low Fat Skyr	100	1	0	17	15
✔✔ Chobani Lowfat Greek	120	2	0	15	15
✔✔ Fage BestSelf Lactose Free Greek	120	2.5	0	17	15
✔✔ Fage Total 2% Greek	120	2.5	0	17	15
Fage Total 5% Greek	160	6	0	15	15
Plain—regular *(6 oz., unless noted)*					
✔✔ Dannon Nonfat	80	0	0	8	25
✔✔ Stonyfield 0% Fat	70	0	0	7	20
✔✔ Green Valley Lactose Free Lowfat	70	1	0	8	20
✔✔ Stonyfield Lowfat	80	1	0	7	20
✔✔ Dannon Low Fat	90	1.5	0	7	20
Dannon Whole Milk	110	4	0	6	15
La Fermière Whole Milk *(5.6 oz.)*	180	9	0	5	15
Flavored—Greek, Skyr, ultra-filtered *(5.3 oz., unless noted)*					
✔✔ Oikos Pro[1]	140	0	0	20	15
✔✔ Oikos Triple Zero Greek[1]	90	0	0	15	10
✔✔ Chobani Zero Sugar Greek[1]	60	0	0	12	10
• Dannon Light + Fit Greek[1]	80	0	2	12	10
✔ Siggi's Fat Free Skyr[1]	110	0	6	15	10
Chobani Nonfat Greek[1]	110	0	9	12	10
• Yoplait Protein[1] *(5.6 oz.)*	100	1	0	15	35
✔✔ Too Good Zero Sugar[1]	70	1	0	13	10
✔✔ Too Good Blended[1]	80	1	0	12	8
✔ Icelandic Provisions Thick & Creamy Skyr—except Coconut[1]	130	1	7	15	15
✔ Siggi's Lowfat Skyr—except Coconut[1]	140	1	7	15	10
• Ratio Protein[1]	170	1.5	0	25	35
✔✔ Too Good Fruit on the Bottom[1]	100	1.5	0	13	10
✔ Chobani Less Sugar Greek[1]	120	1.5	5	12	10
✔ Oikos Remix—except Coco Almond Chocolate[1] *(4.5 oz.)*	120	1.5	6	11	10
✔ Fage BestSelf Lactose Free Greek —Blueberry or Strawberry	120	1.5	7	12	10
✔ Fage Total 2% Greek—except Honey[1]	120	1.5	7	12	10
Oikos Remix Coco Almond Chocolate *(4.5 oz.)*	140	1.5	9	11	10
Fage Total 2% Honey Greek	180	1.5	25	12	10
✔✔ Chobani 20G Protein Greek[1] *(6.7 oz.)*	140	2	0	20	15
Chobani Reduced Fat Greek[1]	140	2	10	11	10
Icelandic Provisions Thick & Creamy Coconut Skyr	150	3	7	15	15
Siggi's Lowfat Coconut Skyr	150	3	8	15	10
Chobani Flip Greek[1] *(4.5 oz.)*	160	3	14	9	10
Chobani Creations Greek[1]	180	4	14	10	10
Flavored—regular					
• Yoplait Light[1] *(6 oz.)*	80	0	1	5	15
• Dannon Light + Fit Original[1] *(5.3 oz.)*	70	0	3	5	10
✔ Green Valley Lactose Free Lowfat[1] *(6 oz.)*	110	0.5	8	7	15
Dannon Fruit on the Bottom[1] *(5.3 oz.)*	120	1	11	5	15
La Fermière[1] *(4.9 oz.)*	190	7	11	4	10
Oui Creamy[1] *(5 oz.)*	210	7	14	5	15
Flavored—high-protein drinks *(1 bottle)*					
✔✔ Oikos Fusion[1] *(7 oz.)*	130	0.5	0	23	15
✔✔ Oikos Pro[1] *(7 oz.)*	140	1	0	23	40
✔✔ Chobani 15G Protein[1] *(7 oz.)*	120	1	0	15	15
✔✔ Chobani 20G Protein[1] *(10 oz.)*	170	2	0	20	25
✔✔ Chobani 30G Protein[1] *(14 oz.)*	220	2.5	0	30	25

PLANT-BASED

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Added Sugar (g)	Protein (g)	Calcium (%DV)
Plain or unsweetened *(6 oz.)*					
✔ Silk Plain Soymilk	110	0.5	4	7	20
✔✔ Silk Unsweet Vanilla Almondmilk	180	1	0	6	10
✔ Silk Plain Almondmilk	200	1	6	6	10
Icelandic Provisions Plain Oatmilk Skyr	170	3.5	3	16	10
Siggi's Sweetened Plain Plant-based Coconut Blend	180	8	4	11	6
Culina Plain & Simple	230	21	0	2	0
Flavored *(5.3 oz., unless noted)*					
Silk Soymilk[1]	130	0	12	6	15
Kite Hill Greek Style[1]	130	0.5	0	15	4
Silk Almondmilk[1]	180	1	14	5	10
Icelandic Provisions Oatmilk Skyr[1] *(5 oz.)*	150	2.5	9	12	6
Siggi's Plant-based Coconut Blend[1]	180	7	7	10	4
Cocojune Greek-Style[1] *(5 oz.)*	160	9	6	8	0
Silk Greek Style Coconutmilk[1]	190	10	9	10	10
Cocojune[1] *(4 oz.)*	180	14	4	1	0

✔✔ Best Bite | ✔ Honorable Mention | • Contains sucralose, acesulfame potassium, and/or food dyes in at least one flavor (to see a list of which ones, go to cspi.org/AdditivesList) | [1]Average of the entire line or the varieties listed

Daily Values (DVs)—Sat Fat 20 g | **Added Sugar** 50 g | **Protein** 50 g | **Calcium** 1,300 mg

Sources: company information and NIQ Product Explorer. Nutrition Facts and ingredients can change, so always check the label. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.

FOOD FIND

Instant goodness

"It's time lentils got a glow up," proclaims **Lentiful.**

Say no more. We took the company's colorful cups for a spin in our microwave. The verdict: There's a lot to like.

Lentiful's shelf-stable "instant lentils" cook up a lot like instant ramen, except that instead of white-flour noodles with salt-heavy seasoning, you're rehydrating fiber-rich lentils that are flavored with dried vegetables, herbs, and spices.

Because every Lentiful cup is mostly lentils (or beans), it's a bundle of nutrients: 6 or 7 grams of fiber, 12 grams of protein, 20 percent of a day's iron, 8 to 10 percent of a day's potassium, plus a handful of vitamins and minerals that aren't typically listed on food labels, including folate, magnesium, and zinc.

Bonus: There's little or no saturated fat or added sugar. And the sodium is reasonable (up to 460 milligrams per cup). Watching every milligram? Lentiful's Low Sodium varieties have no added salt; their naturally occurring sodium adds up to just 15 to 140 mg.

Each Lentiful cup has around 200 calories. For most of us, that's only a light meal or snack. So use the **Tomato Bolognese** as a sauce for your spaghetti, spoon the **Thai Coconut Curry** over brown rice, or bulk up any variety with roasted vegetables, leftover cooked whole grains, and/or a fried or boiled egg.

How easy—and yummy—is that!

FOOD FAIL

Fatty foams

"Protein never tasted so good," says **Starbucks** about its new lineup of lattes, cold brews, and matcha drinks. "Crafted to keep up with your goals, your pace and everything the day brings."

Well, if your goal is to get at least 5 teaspoons of added sugar along with the 19 to 24 grams of protein in a grande (16 oz.) whey-protein-infused cold foam beverage, two of the featured drinks are just the ticket.

One—the **Chocolate Cream Protein Cold Brew**—also delivers 330 calories and 10 grams of saturated fat (half a day's max). That rivals the 10 grams you'd get in a Mocha Frappuccino with whipped cream.

And the **Iced Banana Cream Protein Matcha** may have as much protein as a McDonald's Double Cheeseburger, but it also has as many calories (430) and as much sat fat (13 grams), all in one convenient cup!

How do cold brew coffees and matcha lattes get so fatty? Blame all the cream in the drinks' foam topper.

Don't want a whole new drink? Starbucks has you covered. For a $1 upcharge, you can order any latte, cappuccino, etc., with unsweetened "protein-boosted milk"—2% milk with whey protein. But if you're like most people in the US, you're already eating enough protein. No need to gulp down more in "boosted" milk or foam.

The only "boost" from paying a premium for protein, cream, and sugar is to Starbucks's bottom line.

QUICK DISH

CRISPY BALSAMIC CAULIFLOWER

Halve 4 cups of cauliflower florets. Brush the flat sides with 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil and lightly dust with ¼ cup cornstarch. Place cut side down on a rimmed baking pan and roast in a 425° F oven on the lowest rack until the cut side is well browned, 20–25 minutes. Drizzle with 1 Tbs. bottled balsamic glaze. Season with ¼ tsp. kosher salt. Serves 4.

Photos: Lindsay Moyer - CSPI (top left), Starbucks (top right), Kate Sherwood - CSPI (bottom).