

Healthy Living

CONNECTING WITH OUR PATIENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY

Healthy Eating Made Simple

MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH, A TIME TO FOCUS ON HOW EVERYDAY FOOD CHOICES SUPPORT OVERALL PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

"Rather than focusing on specific rules, healthy eating is about building daily habits that help the body function at its best. Emphasizing foods that provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, and healthy fats can support heart health, digestion, energy levels, and long-term wellness," said Linda Hudak, MS, RDN, clinical nutrition coordinator at Saint Peter's University Hospital.



The Role of Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables play a central role in healthy eating by providing essential nutrients that support the immune system and help reduce the risk of chronic disease. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the week helps ensure the body receives a wide range of nutrients. Fresh, frozen, and canned options can all fit into a healthy eating pattern when prepared with minimal added sugars or sodium.

Choosing Protein Foods and Healthier Fats

Protein is essential for building and repairing tissues and supporting muscle health. A healthy diet includes a variety of protein foods, such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, seafood, poultry, lean red meat, and eggs. Including different protein sources throughout the week helps provide important nutrients and supports balance.

Healthier unsaturated fats can support heart health. These fats are found in foods like olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds. They are also found in certain fish like salmon, tuna, and anchovies.

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Limiting Highly Processed Foods and Added Sugars

Highly processed foods and foods with added sugars should be limited. While these foods may be convenient, they often provide fewer nutrients than whole or minimally processed foods. Eating fewer foods with added sugars can support steady energy levels, dental health, and overall wellness.

Fiber and Gut Health

Fiber is a nutrient many people do not get enough of, yet it plays a key role in health. Fiber supports digestion, helps regulate blood sugar, and contributes to heart health. It also supports gut health by feeding beneficial bacteria that play a role in immune function and overall well-being.

Foods rich in fiber include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds. Including fiber-rich foods at meals and snacks can support digestive health and promote fullness.

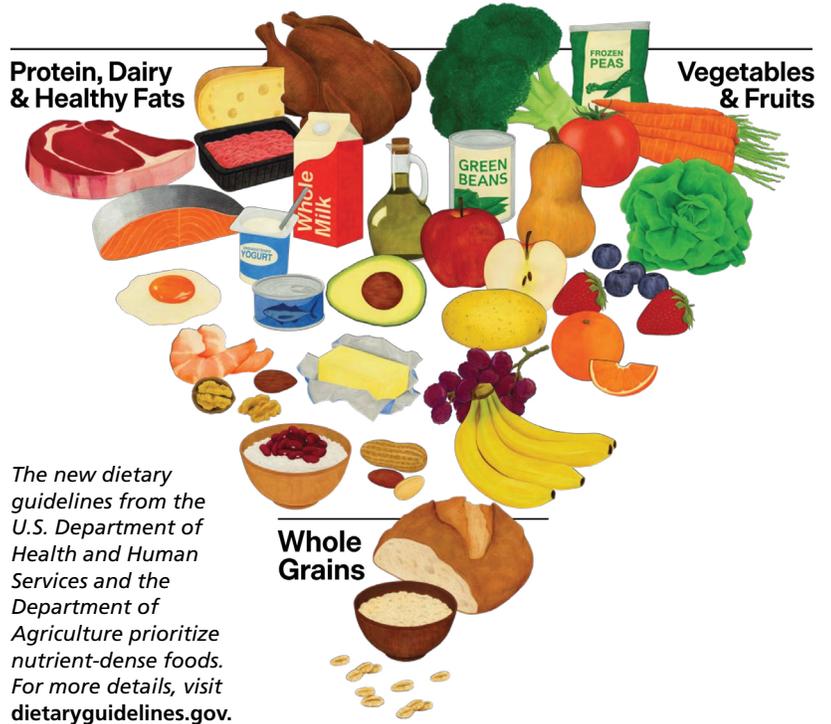
The Importance of Whole Grains

Nutrition experts now suggest that people look at the quality of their grains rather than just the amount they eat. Whole grains, such as brown rice, oats, and whole-wheat bread, are better choices because they contain important B vitamins, minerals, and fiber that the body needs to stay healthy. Because the body takes longer to digest whole grains, they provide steady energy over several hours.

Dairy

Dairy products are a valuable source of protein, essential vitamins, and minerals. For individuals with chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or obesity, choosing lower-fat dairy options may be beneficial. Consult your healthcare provider or a registered dietitian-nutritionist for personalized recommendations.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans



Strategic Habits for Healthy Eating

- **Prep Hero Ingredients:** Instead of cooking full meals ahead of time, prepare two or three versatile items to use all week. A batch of roasted chicken or seasoned lentils can be added to pasta one night, used in a salad for lunch the next day, or folded into a wrap a day later. This keeps meals feeling fresh.
- **The Half-Plate Rule:** An easy way to manage portions without counting calories is by filling half of your plate with fruits and vegetables at every meal. This naturally adds more fiber to the diet.
- **Change Your Environment:** People often eat whatever is easiest to see. Moving a fruit bowl to the center of the kitchen counter and hiding chips in a high cabinet can help reduce mindless snacking. If healthy food is in sight, it is more likely to be chosen.
- **Wait 15 Minutes:** It takes about 15 to 20 minutes for the brain to receive the signal that the stomach is full. If you want a second helping, waiting 15 minutes first can help determine if you are truly still hungry or just eating out of habit.

“Focusing on small improvements and consistent habits can help create a positive and sustainable approach to nutrition for individuals and families,” said Hudak.

To schedule an appointment with a registered dietitian-nutritionist at Saint Peter’s, visit saintpetershcs.com/nutritioncounseling.

The Warning Signs of Colon Cancer

Colon cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable types of cancer, yet it remains a leading health concern. According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer is now the leading cause of cancer death in men under age 50 and the second leading cause for women in that same age group. Recent data also shows a shift in who is being diagnosed with this disease. The Mayo Clinic reports that 10 percent of colon cancer diagnoses now happen in people younger than age 50, while it was only 5 percent in the early 2000s.

“While older adults are routinely screened for colon cancer, younger adults often do not consider it a risk,” said Imran Saeed, MD, FACS, FASCRS, colorectal surgeon and vice chair of the Department of Surgery at Saint Peter’s University Hospital. “As a result, symptoms in younger adults may be mistaken for less serious conditions, leading to delays in diagnosis. Detecting cancer in its early stages significantly improves the chances of a better prognosis.”



Identifying the Warning Signs:



A persistent change in bathroom habits (such as diarrhea or constipation) that lasts for more than a few days



Bloating or feeling full very quickly after eating



Blood in the stool or rectal bleeding



Feeling exhausted all the time



Frequent stomach pain, aches, or cramps that do not go away



Nausea or vomiting



Unexplained weight loss

Why Are Cases Rising in Young People?

“Experts are working to better understand why colon cancer is being diagnosed more often in younger adults,” said Arkady Broder, MD, AGAF, FACG, FASGE, chief of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Saint Peter’s University Hospital. “While there is no one cause, lifestyle factors are likely part of the picture. Even small steps can help lower risk.”

- **Inadequate Nutrition:** Eating too many processed foods can increase the risk of colon cancer. Diets that are high in fiber make it easier for the digestive system to stay healthy.
- **Low Physical Activity:** A sedentary lifestyle can lead to health problems. Regular movement helps the body process food and waste more effectively.
- **Obesity:** Obesity is linked to ongoing inflammation in the body, which may promote the growth of cancer cells. Managing weight can help reduce this risk.



To schedule a colon cancer screening at Saint Peter’s, visit saintpetershcs.com/gastroenterology.

To make an appointment with Dr. Saeed, visit saintpetershcs.com/colorectal.

Cancer Support

Saint Peter's Cancer Center Support Groups

Via Zoom from 1 – 2 PM

English: March 4 and 18

Spanish: March 11 and 25

To register, email sluna@saintpetersuh.com or call 732.745.8600, x6522



Diabetes Education*

For information about classes, call the numbers listed below.



Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

New Session!

Prevent T2 Program (Starting March 31)

Call for information and registration: 732.339.7772

Parent Education

Some classes online. Access information will be provided after registration.

Register at saintpetershcs.com/ParentEd. For more information, call 732.745.8579.

Baby Care

Birth Center Class

(for moms under midwifery care)

Breastfeeding Class

Childbirth Education

(in Spanish)

Grandparents Class

Hypnobirthing™

New Daddy Class

Prenatal Breastfeeding

(in Spanish)

Prenatal Yoga/ Exercise Class

Prepared Childbirth/ Lamaze Classes

Sibling Class

Parent Support

Registration is required. Visit saintpetershcs.com/ParentEd or call 732.745.8579.

New Moms Support Group

"Life Will Never Be The Same"

1st Tuesday of each month

Next meeting: March 3 • 12 pm

Breastfeeding Support Group

1st Tuesday of each month

Next meeting: March 3 • 1 pm

Support Groups

Bariatric Nutrition Support

2nd Thursday of each month

Next meeting: March 12 • 6 – 7 pm

Call 732.339.7450 for Zoom meeting information

Bereavement

Call Pastoral Care for information: 732.745.8565

MyGoal Autism Family

2nd Sunday of each month

Next meeting: March 8 • 3 pm

Call 877.886.9462 or email info@mygoalautism.org for virtual meeting information

SHARE

3rd Thursday of each month

Next meeting: March 19 • 7 – 9 pm

Call 732.745.8522 or email imariano@saintpetersuh.com for Zoom link

Spouse/Partner Caregiver Support

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8653



SAVE THE DATE

2026 FUNDRAISING EVENTS BENEFITING SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Gala

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026
THE PALACE AT SOMERSET

Teeing Off for Kids:

The Dr. Bipin Patel Community Golf Outing

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2026
METUCHEN GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

President's Golf Classic

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2026
THE RIDGE AT BACK BROOK

Three Events.
Countless Ways to Support.
saintpetershcs.com/foundation

Saint Peter's Virtual Urgent Care

Monday through Friday • 5 to 10 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For adults experiencing:

- Cold or flu
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pink eye
- Rash/skin conditions
- Sinus problems
- Sore throat
- Urinary issues

saintpetershcs.com/virtualurgentcare

Need a doctor? To find a Saint Peter's physician, visit saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician.

Online scheduling is also available with select Saint Peter's Healthcare System physicians via Zocdoc at BookMySPDoc.com

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.



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