



# Simple Swaps:

Transforming Unhealthy Choices  
into Nutritious Alternatives



# SIMPLE SWAPS:

## Transforming Unhealthy Choices into Nutritious Alternatives



Making healthier food choices doesn't have to be complicated! You can transform your meals from nutrition-less to nutrition-rich with a few easy substitutions.

Let me show you how to simplify healthy eating, increase nutrient-dense foods in your daily routine, and make better choices for your well-being. We will talk about healthier substitutions for:

**FATS**

**DAIRY**

**PROTEIN**

**CARBOHYDRATES & SUGAR**

**SNACKS**

## ABOUT MARINA

Marina is an award-winning dietitian who believes in a holistic approach to nutrition. As a registered dietitian and nutritionist, she has written two cookbooks on healthy eating. Whether you're recovering post-surgery, aiming for optimal health, or merely seeking to understand the maze of nutrition, she can help you chart a smooth path.

*Marina Savelyeva*

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# FATS

If you want to lose weight or prevent weight gain, start by eating a heart-healthy diet. Make sure to monitor your fat intake and fat sources.

## LIMIT

Butter, coconut oil, soybean oil (or other similar oils), and creamy dressings like ranch, blue cheese, thousand island, and coleslaw dressing. These are all high in unhealthy fats, and calories. Salad dressings are very high in salt as well.

## CHOOSE

Olive oil. It enhances salads, fresh foods, and your cooking. Not to mention, it tastes good! Olive oil also has inflammatory properties, is salt-free, and contains healthy monounsaturated fat. If you're craving something flavorful, choose an infused or flavored olive oil – like garlic, rosemary, or basil.

If not olive oil, you can also try: chia seed oil (contains omega 3s). I suggest using canola oil or avocado oil for foods that aren't appropriate to cook with olive oil.

## LET'S LOOK AT SOME MORE ALTERNATIVES:

Skip the butter: Try adding peanut butter, sunflower seed butter, or almond butter if you enjoy things like porridge or oatmeal.

Go lighter on a mayonnaise: Using mayo sparingly (1-2 Tbsp per day) can be appropriate for some meals. You can substitute mayo with other healthier alternatives. For example, use avocado for you egg or tuna salads sandwiches or choose a low-fat version of mayonnaise.

For dishes like chicken salad: Try low-fat mayo or plain Greek yogurt (low-fat or fat-free).

For sandwiches, tortilla wraps, and lettuce wraps: Try mustard, hummus, sun-dried tomato pesto, or basil pesto as spreads. All delicious options!

# DAIRY

Dairy products are rich in calcium, essential for bone health, and provide protein, vitamins, and minerals. They also support overall nutrition, promoting strong teeth and bone density. There are a few dairy products that contain probiotics – these are live microorganisms that have a health benefit when consumed.

## LIMIT

Whole milk, sour cream, yogurts, and cottage cheese with a high fat content (made with whole milk).

## CHOOSE

Low-fat or fat-free options.

- Whole Milk → 1%, or Fat-Free (Skim)
- Whole Milk Yogurt → Low-Fat or Fat-Free
- Whole Milk Cottage Cheese → Low-Fat or Fat-Free, and with *No salt added*
- Sour cream → Plain, Low-Fat or Nonfat
- Greek yogurt

If you are lactose intolerant, choose lactose-free milk rather than dairy alternatives for better calcium absorption and more protein.

If you prefer to opt for plant-based alternatives due to dairy intolerance or dietary preference, consider soy milk. Soy milk is low in saturated fat and is a good source of plant-based protein. Also, it contains isoflavones, which are a type of plant compound with antioxidant properties.

Additionally, you can look into plant-based alternatives like almond, oat, or coconut milk. Keep in mind these alternatives are very low in protein. Reach for ones that have over 20% of the Daily Value of Calcium. Limit coconut plant-based alternatives as they are high in saturated fats (it is one of the unhealthy fats).



# PROTEIN

Switching from fatty cuts of meat (beef, pork, or lamb, etc.) to lean proteins can significantly reduce your intake of saturated fats. These options are rich in protein and lower in unhealthy fats.

## LIMIT

- Red meat (beef, pork, lamb) to no more than three servings per week as it is high in unhealthy saturated fat.
- Excessive intake of saturated fat contributes to health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer.
- Cured or processed meats — bacon, sausage, hot dogs, corn beef, and ham, as well as deli meats such as chicken, turkey, roast beef, bologna, and salami — often contain added nitrates and nitrites. These preservatives can cause health complications such as an increased risk of cancer.

## CHOOSE

Lean proteins like chicken, fish, shrimp, crab, or scallops. You may also choose plant-based options, including nuts, seeds, tofu, beans, and lentils.

If you want to enjoy red meat occasionally, I suggest filet mignon or lean pork chops.



# CARBOHYDRATES & SUGAR

Good carbohydrates provide fiber, vitamins, and minerals, increase energy and promote digestive health.

Eat good carbs and limit bad carbs.

Good carbs offer many health benefits.

Bad carbs offer little nutritional value and can lead to rapid sugar spikes and crashes.

## LIMIT

Refined grains, pastries, cookies, ice-cream, juices, soda, and candy.

Bread made with bleached flour and bread with no fiber, except sourdough bread.

## CHOOSE

Whole grains, beans, lentils, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

When choosing bread, look for options made with 100% whole grain, sprouted grains, or cracked wheat. Bread types like this contain higher fiber and nutrients, making them a healthier choice for sandwiches and toast. If you enjoy white bread, choose sourdough bread.

You can also look for local bakeries to get freshly baked bread.

## LET'S LOOK AT SOME MORE ALTERNATIVES:

Swap sugary snacks for fresh fruits:

Next time you're craving a sweet treat, reach for fresh fruits. They provide natural sweetness, essential vitamins, and fiber without the added sugars found in many processed snacks.

Swap sodas for infused or herbal tea, sparkling water, or flavored water:

Avoid or limit sugary drinks like soda and juices, as they are high in added sugar and empty calories.

Opt for a refreshing glass of infused water with slices of fruits or herbs, or enjoy a calming cup of herbal tea for a healthier beverage choice.

Limit dark colas (Pepsi, Coca-Cola):

Dark colas are not only high in added sugar, but they also often contain caffeine. Consuming these in excess can lead to issues like increased heart rate, high blood pressure, and sleep disturbances.

Additionally, the acidity in these drinks can potentially erode tooth enamel.

Dark colas also contain phosphorus. Excessive phosphorus intake, especially in the form of phosphoric acid found in colas, can disrupt the balance of calcium in the body. This imbalance may weaken bones and contribute to conditions like osteoporosis over time.

# SNACKS

Prepping snacks in advance can help you make healthier choices, control portion sizes, and save time. Having these snacks readily available makes it easier to avoid reaching for less nutritious options when hungry.

*Looking for something crunchy and salty?*

Reach for a low-fat popcorn instead of potato chips, tortilla chips or Cheetos®.

*Have a sweet tooth?* Try figs, dates, or dry fruits with no added sugar.

Food bars are also good options for an easy/convenient snack:

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Making small changes in your food choices can significantly improve your overall health and well-being. By incorporating these easy substitutions into your diet, you can enjoy delicious meals while nourishing your body with the necessary nutrients. Remember, the little steps can lead to lasting, positive changes in your lifestyle.

Have a Healthy Life,

*Marina Dietitian*

**Your Compass to Nutrition Success**



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