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Managing Your Food Choices  
Michigan State University Extension Service  
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# MANAGING YOUR FOOD CHOICES

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**F**ood choices are the key to a healthy diet. We can make choices which are high or low in calories, high or low in fat, and high or low in nutrients. The choices are up to us.

A healthful diet depends on managing our overall food choices, but this does not happen overnight. Some people need to unlearn some inappropriate habits related to food and learn how to make appropriate choices.

Choosing to eat healthful foods is a decision that will affect us the remainder of our lives. It is a commitment to a lifelong, healthful eating pattern.

This bulletin presents a food management system which is based on food lists. Foods are grouped in lists according to the amount of calories, protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals they contain. Because each list has a certain calorie value, the serving sizes may be different than servings you are accustomed to if you have previously used the food group system to choose your food.

Within each food list, the serving sizes are based on the number of calories in the food. The calories for each food list are given at the beginning of the list. Each food in the list is equivalent in calories, if

*This bulletin has been developed to accompany MSU Extension Bulletin E-1783 "In the Market for Weight Loss."*

## Portions You May Eat Each Day

Listed below are the number of servings from each food list recommended at each calorie level.

Food List	Do not eat less than	CALORIES			
		1200	1500	1800	2100
Protein Foods	2	2½	3	3½	3½
Starchy Foods	4	4	5	7	10
Milk	2	3	3	3	3
Fruit	1	2	4	4	5
Vegetables	3	3	4	5	5
Fat		3	4	5	6
Free Foods		unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited

## Sample Meal Plan for 1500 Calorie Diet

The following menu gives you an idea of how your food choices might be distributed if you were eating 1500 calories a day:

### BREAKFAST

½ cup orange juice	(1 fruit)
½ cup oatmeal	(1 starchy food)
1 cup skim milk	(1 milk)
1 slice toast w/cheese	(1 starchy food, ½ protein)

### SNACK

1 cup vegetable juice cocktail	(1 vegetable)
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### LUNCH

Tuna fish sandwich	
on whole wheat bread	(2 starch foods)
with 2 tsp salad dressing	(1 fat)
½ cup tuna, water pack	(½ protein)
½ cup spinach	(1 vegetable)
with dressing of lemon juice	(free)
+ 1 tsp bacon drippings	(1 fat)
and 1 slice bacon, cooked	(1 fat)
1 cup skim milk	(1 milk)
1 medium apple	(1 fruit)

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you choose the serving size listed. Foods which are high in fat are marked for those who are watching their fat intake. This food management system eliminates the need to count calories and allows you to choose foods you like.

After the food lists, an example is given which shows how foods in the lists can be worked into a day's meals. Sample plans are given for managing food choices at 1200, 1500, 1800, and 2100 calorie levels.

A 1200 calorie level of food intake will only provide adequate nutrients if very careful food choices are made. The 1200 calorie level does not allow you to make food choices which are low in nutrients, if you want to obtain adequate nutrients for good health. Careful attention must be given to choosing sufficient foods in each food list to assure obtaining adequate protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. This means strictly limiting consumption of sweets, desserts and snack foods which are high in calories and low in nutrients.

If you plan to lose weight, consult your physician. It is important to make sure that you do not have a medical problem which should be treated before beginning a weight loss program.

## Food Lists

The foods in the following food lists are categorized according to the amount of calories, protein, fat and carbohydrates as well as vitamins and minerals each provides. There are ten food lists:

- Protein Foods List
- Starchy Foods List
- Milk List
- Fruit List
- Vegetable List
- Fat List
- Free Food List
- Combination Food List
- Dessert List
- Fast Food List

## Sample Meal Plan

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### DINNER

½ cup mixed fruit, <i>no sugar added</i>	(1 fruit)
4 oz lean beef	(2 protein)
½ cup broccoli	(1 vegetable)
½ cup carrots	(1 vegetable)
½ cup ice milk	(1 starch, 1 fat)
Beverage	(free list)

### SNACK

1 cup skim milk	(1 milk)
4 dried apricot halves	(1 fruit)

The following are the 10 food lists from which to make daily food choices.

## Protein Foods

### Lean Protein Foods

1 Serving = 110 Calories, 6 gm. fat

Food Item	One Serving
Lean meat: beef, lamb, pork, poultry (dark meat), veal, wild game	2 oz cooked
Chicken or turkey, white meat	3 oz
Fish	4 oz or 1 cup
Fish sticks (also count 1 starch)	8 small
Frankfurters, chicken or turkey	3 oz
Oysters, shrimp, clams	10 small
Sardines, drained	6
Cottage Cheese, low fat	2/3 cup
Cottage Cheese, regular	½ cup
Cheese, lowfat (mozzarella)	2 oz
Egg substitute, low cholesterol	½ cup
Dried beans and peas (also count 2 starch)	1 cup

### Higher Fat Protein Foods

(When you choose these foods, you must also count them as part of your servings of fat foods, because of their higher calorie values due to fat content. Limit choices from higher fat foods to 3-4 servings/week. One serving peanut butter can be chosen one time/day.)

Food Item	One Serving
Egg (also count 2 fat servings)	2 eggs
Cheese: colby, cheddar, swiss (also count 2 fat)	2 oz
Cold Cuts (also count 2 fat)	2 oz
Sausage (also count 2 fat)	4 links
Sausage, Vienna (also count 2 fat)	6
Peanut butter (subtract 2½ fat servings, limit to one serving per day)	2 Tbsp



# Using the Food Lists

In using the following food lists, carefully read the serving sizes. Any food can be chosen from the list, as long as the serving size is followed. If you eat more than the serving size shown, you need to count more than one serving from that food list. Foods cannot be substituted for each other between food lists, only within each list. At first you may want to weigh and/or measure foods. You may be surprised at the size servings you are actually eating, compared with what you thought you were eating.

Because it is not possible to categorize every combination food into its component parts, you may need to consult recipe books to determine the ingredients in casseroles or other combination dishes. Examples of a few frequently eaten combination dishes are given to demonstrate how to determine the foods to be counted. Other difficult foods to count are desserts and extras. Extras frequently supply calories without providing equivalent nutrients. Examples of extras are given with the caution not to choose these more than once a day unless you are very active or using one of the higher calorie patterns. (You may wish to consult "In the Market for Weight Loss," MSU Extension Bulletin E-1783, for an explanation of activity levels and determining calorie needs.)

As you can see, when food choices are made from a variety of foods, and the high fat categories are limited, you can eat a lot of food. This food management plan makes possible choosing food according to your preferences within the calorie guidelines which will help you maintain your weight. It is also possible to use these guidelines if you choose to eliminate certain foods from your diet (i.e.: meats) by making other

# Starchy Foods

1 serving = 70 calories, 0 gm. fat  
(Starred items higher in fat, also count fat servings)

Food Item	One Serving
Bagel	½ average
Bread	1 slice
Bread, low calorie (40 cal or less per slice)	2 slices
*Biscuit, roll, muffin (2" diameter)	1
Bun, hamburger or weiner	½
*Cornbread, 2 x 2 x 1"	1
English muffin, 2 oz.	½
Bread crumbs	3 Tbsp
*Bread dressing	1/3 cup
Bread sticks, 9"	2
Cereals:	
Cooked—oatmeal, grits	½ cup
Flakes	¾ cup
Puffed	1 cup
Grapenuts or Bud type	¼ cup
Shredded wheat	1 biscuit
Bran	½ cup
Crackers:	
Animal	8
Graham, 2½" square	2
Oyster	20
Pretzels, small stick	15
*Round, 1½" diameter	5
Saltines, 2" square	6
Cornstarch	2 Tbsp
Flour	2½ Tbsp
Hominy, cooked	½ cup
Macaroni, noodles, spaghetti, cooked	½ cup
Matzo, 4 x 6"	½
Melba toast	4 slices
*Pancake, 5" diameter	1
Popcorn, popped in oil	1½ cup
Popcorn, popped without oil	3 cups
Rice, cooked	½ cup
Tapioca, dry	2 Tbsp
*Tortilla shell 6" diameter, baked	
Vegetables, cooked:	
Corn	1/3 cup or 3" ear
Dried: beans, peas, lentils, garbonza, kidney, navy, pinto, soybeans (omit 1 meat serving)	½ cup
Peas, green or English	½ cup
Parsnips	2/3 cup
Potatoes, sweet or yam	¼ cup
Potatoes, white baked or boiled, 2" diameter	1
*French fries, baked or broiled, ½ x ½ x 2")	8
Potatoes, mashed	½ cup
Pumpkin	¾ cup
Squash: winter-acorn, hubbard, butternut	½ cup
Waffle, 5" square	1
Wheat germ	3 Tbsp

\*Subtract 1 FAT SERVING per STARCH SERVING  
1½ FRUIT SERVINGS may be substituted for 1 STARCH SERVING.



choices within that food list. You will note that dried beans, peas and lentils are listed both in the protein and the starchy food lists. Also, cheese, eggs and peanut butter are alternate protein sources.

If you are on a special diet for diabetes, heart disease or other conditions, these food lists should only be used with the approval of your physician. If you just want to improve your diet, your county Extension home economist can provide you with additional materials and programs.

## Milk

1 serving = 80 calories, trace fat

(Starred items higher in fat, also count as fat servings)

Food Item	One Serving
Milk, skim or ½%	8 oz
Buttermilk	8 oz
Evaporated skim, undiluted	4 oz
Powdered skim (nonfat dry before adding liquid)	1/3 cup
*Yogurt, plain, made with nonfat dry milk	8 oz
*Milk, 1% (omit ½ fat)	8 oz
*Milk, 2% (omit 1 fat)	8 oz
*Yogurt, plain made with 1 or 2% milk (omit 1 fat)	1 cup
*Yogurt, fruit flavored made with 1 or 2% milk (omit 1 fat, 2 starches)	1 cup
*Chocolate, 2% (omit 1 fat, 1 starch)	1 cup
*Yogurt, vanilla or lemon-flavored (omit 1 fat, 1 starch)	1 cup
*Milk, homogenized, whole or 3.5% (omit 2 fat)	8 oz
*Evaporated whole, undiluted (omit 2 fat)	4 oz
*Yogurt, fruit flavored, whole milk (omit 2 starch, 2 fat)	1 cup

## Fruit

1 serving = 40 calories, 0 gm. fat

(Fruits may be fresh, dried, cooked, canned, or frozen, AS LONG AS NO SUGAR IS ADDED. CHECK LABELS. Choose canned fruits packed in their own juice.)

Food Item	One Serving
Apple	½ large or 1 small 2"
Apple juice, cider	1/3 cup
Applesauce, unsweetened	½ cup
Apricots, fresh	2 medium
Apricots, dried or canned	4 halves
Apricot juice	1/3 cup
Banana	3" long (½ small)
Berries:	
Blackberries	½ cup
Blueberries	½ cup
Cranberries	1 cup
Raspberries	½ cup
*Strawberries	¾ cup
*Cantaloupe, 6" diameter	¼
Cherries	10 large or 15 small
Dates	2 small
Figs, fresh	1
Figs, dried	1
Fruit cocktail	½ cup
*Grapefruit	½
*Grapefruit juice	½ cup
*Grapefruit sections	½ cup
Grapes	12
Grape juice	¼ cup
Honeydew, 6" diameter	⅛
*Lemon	1 large
*Lime	1 medium
Mango	½ small
Nectarine	1 small

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# Fruit

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*Orange	1 small
*Orange juice	½ cup
*Orange sections	½ cup
*Papaya	¾ cup
Peach	1 medium
Peach halves	2
Peach slices	½ cup
Peach juice	1/3 cup
Pear	½ large or 1 small
Pear halves	2 small
Pear juice	1/3 cup
Pineapple	½ cup or 1½ rings
Pineapple juice	¼ cup
Plums	2 medium
Prunes, dried	2 medium
Prune juice	¼ cup
Raisins	½ oz or 2 Tbsp
Rhubarb	1 cup
*Tangerine	1 medium
*Tomato juice	1 cup
Watermelon, 3" x 1½" slice	1
Watermelon, diced	1 cup

\*These fruits are good sources of Vitamin C. One should be included daily.

# Vegetables

1 Serving = 25 Calories, 0 gm. fat

(Serve vegetables raw or cooked; if fat is added in preparation, also count the equivalent fat serving.)

One Serving = ½ cup cooked or raw

Alfalfa sprouts	Kohlrabi
Artichoke	Lettuce, all varieties
Asparagus	Mushrooms
Bamboo shoots	Okra
Bean sprouts	Onions
Beans, string or green	Pea pods
Beans, wax	Pepper, green or red
Beets	Pickles, unsweetened
*Broccoli	Pimiento
Brussels sprouts	Radishes
Cabbage	Rhubarb
Cauliflower	Rutabaga
*Carrots	Sauerkraut
Celery	Spinach
Cucumber	Squash, summer, zucchini
Eggplant	*Tomatoes
*Greens: beet, chard,	*Tomato juice, 4 oz
chicory, collard,	Tomato sauce
dandelion, kale,	Turnips
mustard, spinach,	*Vegetable juice cocktail, 4 oz
turnip	Watercress

\*These vegetables are good sources of Vitamin A. One should be eaten at least three times a week.



# Fat

1 Serving = 45 Calories, 5 gm. fat

Food Item	One Serving
Avocado, 4" diameter	1/8
Butter	1 tsp
Margarine	1 tsp
Margarine, diet	2 tsp
Nuts, regular or dry roasted	
Almonds	10 whole
Cashews	4 whole
Peanuts	10 large or 20 small
Pecans	2 whole
Others	6 small
Chopped nuts	1 Tbsp
Oil or cooking fat, vegetable	1 tsp
Olives	5 small or 3 large
Salad Dressings:	
Blue cheese	2 tsp
French	1 Tbsp
Italian	1 Tbsp
Mayonnaise	1 tsp
Mayonnaise, Weight Watchers	1 Tbsp
Miracle Whip	2 tsp
Green Goddess	1 Tbsp
Thousand Island	2 tsp
Low calorie creamy	1 Tbsp
Low calorie Italian, French	3 Tbsp
Bacon, crisp	1 slice
Butter, lard	1 tsp
Cream:	
Coffee, 20%	2 Tbsp
Half & Half, 12%	3 Tbsp
Sour, 20%	2 Tbsp
Whipping, 38%	1 Tbsp
Cream cheese	1 Tbsp

# Free Foods

## Free Foods

Choose as many as you like.

### Foods and Seasonings

Clear broth	Salt
Clear bouillion	Spices and Herbs
Coffee, NO SUGAR OR CREAM	Tea, NO SUGAR OR CREAM
Gelatin, unsweetened or diet	Vinegar
Lemon juice (limit 2 Tbsp)	Ice water
Mustard	Club soda
Pepper	Diet soda
Lime juice	



# Combination Foods

(Count these as servings of protein, starch, fat and vegetable foods as indicated for each dish.)

	Serving Size	Kcal	Protein	Starch	Fat	Veg.
<b>MIXED DISHES</b>						
Macaroni and Cheese	¾ cup	288	½	2	2½	
Spaghetti & Tomato Sauce, no meat	1 cup	140	—	2	—	
Spaghetti, with ground beef	1 cup	223	1	1½	1	
Chili con carne, with beans	1 cup	300	—	3	2	
Ravioli, with beef	1 cup	220	—	2½	1	
Cheese Ravioli	1 cup	328	1	3	1	
Lasagna	1 cup	296	2	1½	1	
Spanish Rice-A-Roni	1 cup	265	—	2½	2	
Beans and Franks	1 cup	331	2	2	1	
Pork and Beans	1 cup	175	—	2½	—	
Wild Rice-A-Roni	1 cup	300	—	3	2	
Mrs. Paul's Frozen Fish Sticks	4 sticks	166	1	1	½	
Chicken Chow Mein, no rice	1 cup	143	1	1	0	
Beef Chop Suey, no rice	1 cup	143	1	1	0	
Pizza, cheese, sausage or pepperoni	1/16 (14-16 oz)	151	½	1	1	
Frozen or refrigerated	1/16 (14-16 oz)	151	½	1	1	
Homemade	5 ½" sections or ⅛ (14")	175	1	1½	—	
Mix	¼ (14", 12.5 oz pkg.)	221	½	2	1	
Beef Stew	1 cup	226	2	1	—	
Chow Mein Noodles	½ small can	195	—	1½	2	
Fish sticks, frozen	3 sticks	226	2	1	—	
Luncheon meats: (bologna, salami, etc.)	1 slice	123	1	—	1	
Shrimp	7	78	1	—	—	
Vienna sausage	2—2"	78	1	—	—	
Legumes, dry beans, dry peas, lentils	½ cup	160	1	1	—	
Soy sauce	free					
<b>POTPIES, 1 pkg.</b>						
Beef		401	2	2	2	1
Chicken		401	2	2	2	1
Tuna		446	2	2	3	1
Turkey		401	2	2	2	1
<b>T.V. DINNERS</b>						
Ham (add ½ fruit exchange)	1 pkg.	435	5	1		
Turkey, Beef, Salisbury steak, Fish, Meatloaf	1 pkg.	505	5	2		
<b>POTATOES</b>						
Frozen french fries	½ cup	150		1½	1	
Tater tots	½ cup	195		1½	2	
Onion rings	½ cup	160		1	2	
Bread stuffing	1/3 cup	115		1	1	
<b>SOUP EXCHANGES (1 cup portions based on ½ cup soup diluted with ½ cup water)</b>						
Beef noodle	1 cup	72		1	—	
Chicken noodle, O's or gumbo	1 cup	54		¾	—	
Clam chowder, Manhattan	1 cup	93		1	½	
Clam chowder, N.E. (add 1 milk)	1 cup	112		1	1	
Cream of mushroom or chicken	1 cup	125		1	1	
Tomato, diluted w/water	1 cup	92		½	½	1
Vegetable	1 cup	92		½	½	1
Vegetable Beef	1 cup	92		½	½	1
Onion	1 cup	46		—	½	1
Chunky Beef	1 cup	162	1¼	1	—	
Chunky vegetable	1 cup	100		1	½	½
Minestrone	1 cup	92		½	½	1
Bean with bacon	1 cup	185	1	1½		
Potato, cream of	1 cup	110		1	1	
Split pea with ham	1 cup	185	1	1½		



# Dessert List

	Serving Size	Count As:
<b>COOKIES</b>		
Animal crackers	7	1 starch
Fig Newtons	2 average	1½ starch
Gingersnaps	5 small	1 starch
Ladyfingers	2 large	1 starch
Lorna Doone shortbread	3	1 starch, 1 fat
Oreo cream sandwich	2	1 starch, 1 fat
Sugar cookie	1—3"	1 starch, ½ fat
Vanilla wafers	7	1 starch, 1 fat
<b>DESSERTS</b>		
Angel food cake, no icing	1/20 (1½")	1 starch
Apple pie	1/6 of 9" pie	3½ starch, 1 fruit, 3 fat
Cake, no icing	1/12	2½ starch, 1 fat
Cupcake, no icing	1	1½ starch, 1 fat
Cake donut	1	1 starch, 1 fat
Cool Whip	2 rounded Tbsp	1 fat
Coffeecake	2" x 2"	2½ starch, 1½ fat
Fruitcake	3" x 3" x ½"	1½ starch, 1 fat
Gelatin, sweetened	1/3 cup	1 starch
Hawaiian punch	1/3 cup	1 fruit
Hot fudge sauce	1 Tbsp	½ starch, ½ fat
Ice cream	½ cup	1 starch, 2 fat
Ice milk	½ cup	1 starch, 1 fat
Mincemeat pie	1/6" of 9" pie	3½ starch, 1 fruit, 3½ fat
Pecan pie	1/6 or 9" pie	4 starch, 1 meat, 7 fat
Popsicles	1 twinbar	2 fruit
Pudding	½ cup	1½ starch, ½ milk, ½ fat
Pumpkin pie	1/6 of 9" pie	1½ starch, 1 skim milk, 3 fat
Sherbert	¼ cup	1 starch
Tang	¼ cup	1 fruit
<b>CANDY</b> (Candy bars are usually more than 1 oz, so read label)		
Baby Ruth	1 oz	1½ starch, 1 fat
Fudge	1 ¼" square	1½ starch, ½ fat
Hershey Chocolate Almond	1 oz	1 starch, 2 fat
Hershey Milk Chocolate	1 oz	1 starch, 2 fat
M&M's, plain	1 oz	1½ starch
M&M's, peanut	1 oz	1½ starch, 1 fat
Milky Way	1 oz	1 starch, 1 fat
Mr. Goodbar	1 oz	1 starch, 2 fat
Nestle's Crunch bar	1 oz	1 starch, 1 fat
Nestle's Quik (for milk)	2 heaping teaspoons	1 starch
Snickers	1¼ oz	1½ starch, 1 fat
Three Musketeers	1⅜ oz	2½ starch
Tootsie Roll	2 midgets	½ starch

# Fast Food List\*

	Calories	Count As:
Hamburger, 1 pattie and bun	230-260	1 protein, 2 starch, 1½ fat
French Fries, regular order	210-240	2 starch, 2 fat
Chocolate shake, 11 oz	310-600	½ protein, 3 starch, 1 fat (for 310)
Coke, 11 oz	120	2 starch

\*Fast food values are very rough estimates, as the composition and caloric values of fast foods vary among franchises.