

# DIET & NUTRITION

The importance of diet has been reinforced in many ways. Research and individual experiences show improving the nutritional content of a person's diet can improve seizure control, brain health, and well-being in some people.



This factsheet offers information about diet and nutrition in general. For information about specific diet treatments for epilepsy, visit [epilepsy.com/dietary-therapy](http://epilepsy.com/dietary-therapy). Special epilepsy diets should only be undertaken with a nutritionist and physician.

## What does eating healthy mean?

- ▶ Eating properly prepared, nutrient-dense, whole foods
- ▶ Enjoying food in a positive, healthy environment
- ▶ Minimizing processed foods and refined sugars
- ▶ Eating recommended portions, ensuring fruit and vegetable intake ([choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov))



## What are nutrient-dense foods?

Nutrient-dense foods have lots of nutrients such as vitamins and minerals, fiber, lean protein, and unsaturated fats but are not high in calories. These foods are essential for a healthy brain as well. Some examples are:

- ▶ Fruit and vegetables
- ▶ Whole grains
- ▶ Low fat dairy products such as milk or yogurt
- ▶ Fish, such as salmon
- ▶ Lean meat



## Why are diet and nutrition important for people with epilepsy and their caregivers?

Studies show that eating whole foods low in sugar have a positive impact on:

- ▶ Seizure control
- ▶ Depression/anxiety
- ▶ Other conditions related to epilepsy

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For caregivers, eating a healthy diet can help to:

- ▶ Prevent illness
- ▶ Increase energy
- ▶ Balance moods

Remember, caring for yourself is part of being a good caregiver.

*Note: Folate (folic acid) is important for everyone's health. It can also protect unborn babies against serious birth defects. Women taking seizure medicines who could possibly become pregnant should talk to their health care provider about taking folic acid each day.*

## Can I make these changes on my own?

It's always a good idea to talk with your health care team before making any major changes. They may have specific diet recommendations for you. If you're having trouble getting started or sticking to changes in your diet, consult a nutritionist. They can assess your needs and any problems you may be having. They can also help develop meal plans, monitor your progress, and provide support along the way.



## How can I begin?

- ▶ **Minimize:**  
Start by removing the processed, sugary, boxed/packaged foods in your home.
- ▶ **Stock Up:**  
Stock up your kitchen with whole and unprocessed foods.
- ▶ **Community:**  
Surround yourself with a community that supports your healthy eating habits. Let people in your community and your medical team know about the dietary changes you're making and encourage them to join you, support you, and help keep you accountable.

It may be hard to change old habits and how you eat. But the longer you stick with it, unhealthy food cravings will subside and you will feel better than ever.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ Diet and Nutrition: [epilepsy.com/healthy-eating](http://epilepsy.com/healthy-eating)
- ▶ Dietary Therapies: [epilepsy.com/dietary-therapy](http://epilepsy.com/dietary-therapy)
- ▶ Charlie Foundation: [charlifoundation.org](http://charlifoundation.org)