

Empowered Plates. Balanced Habits. Brighter Futures.

March is National Nutrition Month

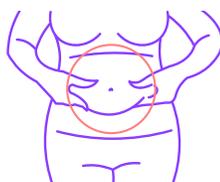


Let's Talk Real Life & Nutrition

The truth is... as we get older, our bodies change. Our metabolism naturally slows down over time, and for women especially, hormonal changes (like pregnancy, stress, perimenopause, and menopause) can make it even harder to maintain weight the way we used to in our 20s and 30s. That doesn't mean something is "wrong" with you. It means your body just needs a little different kind of support.

The more carbs and processed foods we eat, especially white breads, sugary snacks, fried foods, sweet drinks, and packaged convenience meals the harder our bodies have to work. Over time, too much processed food can:

- Spike blood sugar
- Increase belly fat storage
- Slow energy levels
- Increase inflammation
- Raise risk for diabetes and heart disease



And here's something many people don't realize:

- ◆ After age 30, we naturally begin to lose muscle mass each decade and muscle helps burn calories.
- ◆ Women need more protein than we often think, especially as we age.
- ◆ Lack of sleep can increase hunger hormones and cravings.
- ◆ Chronic stress can raise cortisol levels, which can contribute to weight gain around the midsection.

So, if you've ever said, "I don't eat that much, but I can't lose weight like I used to," you're not imagining it.

The goal isn't to stop eating carbs completely. It's about balance. Choosing whole grains instead of refined ones. Drinking water instead of sugary drinks. Adding more fiber, protein, and vegetables to your plate so your body feels supported, not deprived. Small shifts really do matter.

Cut Down on Added Sugars

It's important to be mindful of foods and drinks that are high in added sugars not because you can never have them, but because they add up quickly. When a big portion of our daily intake comes from sugary snacks and drinks, it becomes harder to get the nutrients our bodies actually need without also taking in too many extra calories.

And the tricky part? Added sugars don't really fill us up. So, we can end up feeling hungry, low on energy, and still not fully nourished. Over time, that makes it harder to maintain a healthy weight and support our overall wellness.

It's not about cutting everything out, it's about creating balance so your body gets more of what helps it thrive and less of what quietly works against it.

Learn how to cut back on added sugars.

➔ What are added sugars?

Added sugars are sugars that are added to foods and drinks during processing or preparation, including sweeteners like table sugar, syrups, and honey. These sugars aren't naturally occurring they're extra ingredients meant to enhance flavor. You'll commonly find them in:



Regular soda, sweetened coffee or tea beverages, fruit drinks that are not 100% juice, energy drinks, and flavored milks. These drinks often contain significant amounts of added sugar and can quickly increase your daily intake.



Treats like cookies, cake, ice cream, chips, donuts, and candy.



Foods like granola bars, flavored yogurts, and many popular breakfast cereals often contain added sugars. Even items that seem healthy can have more sugar than you expect, so it's important to check the label.

Some foods and beverages naturally contain sugar, including whole fruits, 100% fruit juice, plain milk, and plain yogurt. The sugars found in these items occur naturally and are not considered added sugars.



What about fruit juice?

Most of the time, **choose whole fruits** instead of juice. If you do drink juice:

- Choose 100% fruit juice, which doesn't have added sugars
- Have a small serving.



Let's Talk About Sugary Coffee Drinks

That daily coffee run might feel harmless... but those sugary coffee drinks can quietly add to weight gain.

Many flavored lattes, frappes, and specialty coffees can contain:

- 250–500+ calories
- 30–60 grams of sugar
- Whipped cream and flavored syrups loaded with added sugars

To put that in perspective, 40 grams of sugar is about 10 teaspoons.

When we regularly drink our calories instead of eating them, our bodies don't register fullness the same way. So we end up consuming extra calories without feeling satisfied. Over time, that can contribute to:

- Increased belly fat
- Blood sugar spikes and crashes
- Cravings later in the day
- Slower metabolism support

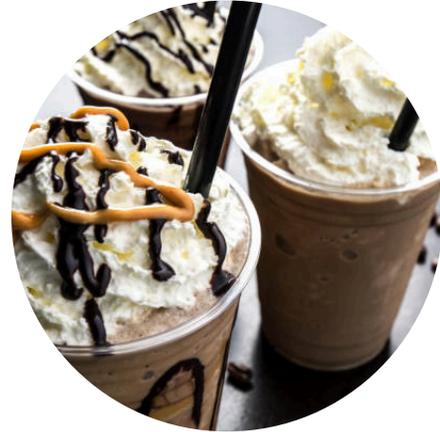
And here's the part no one talks about when stress is high and sleep is low (which many women experience), we're more likely to crave sweet coffee drinks for a quick energy boost.

There's nothing wrong with enjoying one occasionally. The key is awareness.

Smarter Swaps

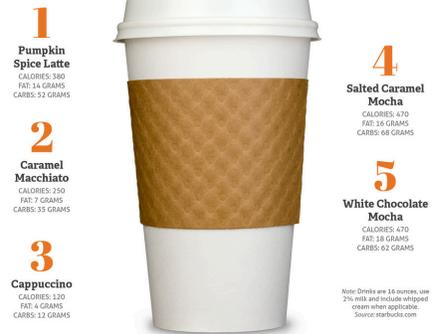
- Ask for half the syrup pumps
- Choose unsweetened almond or oat milk
- Skip whipped cream (saves you about 70 calories and half the fat)
- Try cinnamon or nutmeg for flavor
- Order a smaller size
- Or try plain coffee with a splash of milk and a natural sweetener (or opt out for nonfat milk or coconut, soy or almond milk)

Small changes really do add up — especially when it's something we drink every day.



How Many Calories are Hiding in Your Cup of Joe?

If you're not ordering regular coffee, there's a good chance your morning cup has more calories than you think.



 Visit [OhioHealth.com/Blog](https://www.ohiohealth.com/blog) for more tips to stay healthy!

Your Coffee Habit Math

That daily coffee run adds up faster than you think.

If you drink a **400-calorie specialty coffee**

 5 days a week

= 2,000 calories per week

Over time, that's:

 **8,000 calories per month**

 **Over 100,000 calories per year**

That's the equivalent of nearly **30 pounds worth of calories** in a year, from coffee alone.

Small daily habits create big yearly results.

Try downsizing, reducing syrup pumps, or switching to unsweetened options. Even cutting 150–200 calories per drink makes a major difference over time.



Energy Drinks: What You Should Know (Especially for Men)

Energy drinks are everywhere, at gas stations, in gyms, at work, and they're often marketed as a quick fix for fatigue. But many of these drinks are loaded with high amounts of caffeine and added sugars, which can quietly contribute to an unhealthy diet.

Some energy drinks contain **150–300 mg of caffeine per can** (sometimes more), along with **20–50+ grams of sugar**. That combination can cause blood sugar spikes, crashes, jitters, and increased cravings later in the day. Over time, frequent use may contribute to weight gain, high blood pressure, sleep disruption, and increased heart strain.

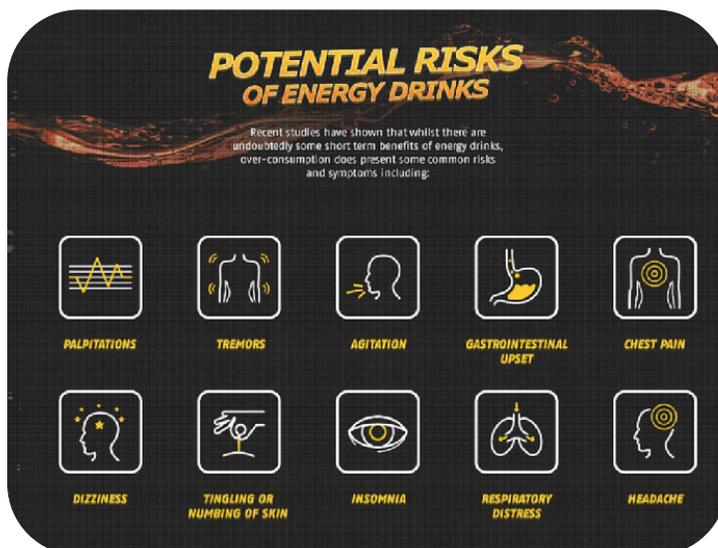
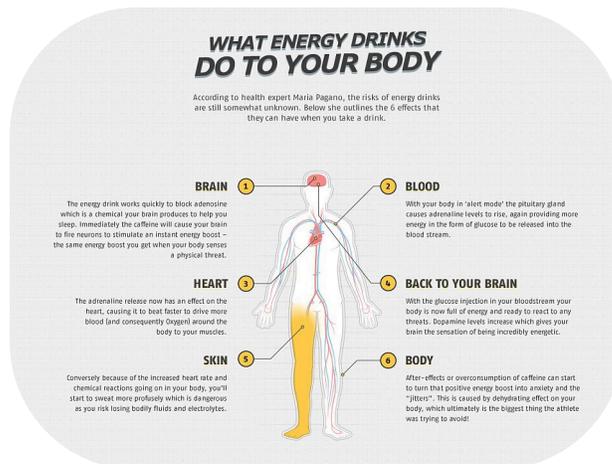
For men in particular, excessive caffeine intake has been linked to elevated blood pressure and increased risk of heart rhythm issues. Combined with poor sleep, stress, and a diet high in processed foods, energy drinks can become part of a cycle that impacts heart health, metabolism, and overall wellness.

The bigger issue? Many people rely on energy drinks because they're already exhausted often from lack of sleep, high stress, or skipping balanced meals.

Smarter Ways to Boost Energy

- Prioritize 6–8 hours of sleep
- Stay hydrated (dehydration causes fatigue)
- Eat balanced meals with protein and fiber
- Try green tea or black coffee in moderation
- Move your body – even a 10-minute walk helps

Energy shouldn't come from a can, it should come from consistent, supportive habits.



Director's Corner

I know some of this may sound repetitive – eat better, drink more water, cut back on sugar. But the truth is, we need reminders. Life gets busy, and sometimes it's the small, consistent changes that make the biggest difference. If you take one small step this week toward better health, that's progress – and progress is what we're aiming for. I came across this carrot chicken salad recipe on social media and decided to give it a try. I'll be honest I was a little skeptical at first because some of the ingredients were outside of my usual comfort zone. But when I tell you this salad was delicious... it really surprised me! Of course, I put my own little twist on it (because that's what we do), and it turned out just as good. It reminded me that sometimes stepping outside of our routine even with food can lead to healthier, flavorful options we didn't expect to love.



High-Protein Carrot Chicken Salad

Ingredients (Serves 1-2)

- 4-5 large carrots, shaved into ribbons
- 1 cooked chicken breast, shredded or diced
- ¼ red onion (sliced) + ¼ cup green onion
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- ⅓ cup cashews or peanuts

Dressing:

- 2 tbsp soy sauce or tamari
- 3 tbsp rice or apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 1-2 tsp honey or preferred sweetener
- 2 garlic cloves (grated)
- 1 tbsp chili oil (optional)
- Sesame seeds for topping

Instructions

Shave carrots into ribbons. Combine carrots, chicken, onions, cilantro, and garlic in a bowl. Whisk dressing ingredients together, pour over salad, and toss well. Top with nuts and sesame seeds. Chill 15 minutes before serving for best flavor.



Why It's a Smart Choice

- ✓ High in protein (about 30-45g per serving)
- ✓ Rich in beta-carotene for immune and skin support
- ✓ Lower in carbs and calories than many traditional salads
- ✓ Fiber-rich ingredients support digestion

Easy Chicken & Veggie Skillet

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken (sliced)
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 1 zucchini (sliced)
- 1 bell pepper (sliced)
- 1 yellow onion (sliced)
- 3-4 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 tbsp Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Instructions

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, vegetables, garlic, and seasonings. Cook 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until chicken is fully cooked and vegetables are tender.