Nutrition tips for the healthiest summer ever

Summer's finally here! And after a long, harsh winter, everyone is looking forward to backyard BBQs, day trips to the beach, and weekend getaways to the cottage. The foods that often accompany these activities—hamburgers, cotton candy, potato chips and hot dogs—are hard to ignore, but do little to fuel your body with the nutrients it needs.



As the temperature rises, it's important to eat foods that will help maintain energy. So instead of reaching for that hot dog or can of pop, read the tips below to find out how to make this summer the healthiest season ever!

Take advantage of fresh produce. With produce at its peak during the summer months, now is the perfect time to indulge in nature's finest by eating the freshest vegetables. Instead of whipping up a batch of potato salad for your next BBQ, put together a mixed green salad. If you're up to the task, create your own salad dressing. Do an Internet search, or check out recipe books to get ideas for different salads and dressings.

Eat your berries. Like vegetables, the most flavourful berries are readily available in summer. Instead of reaching for apple pie à la mode, make yourself a delicious fruit smoothie for dessert. When choosing fruits, always make sure you're getting the freshest, and best quality fruit. If you're unsure on how to pick produce, ask an employee in the produce department to help. Have fun during this summer by going to different farmers' markets or going berry picking.

Choose lean meats. Backyard BBQs and outdoor cookouts are common sights during summer. But eating the traditional cookout food—hamburgers, and hot dogs—can expand your waistline and increase your fat intake. Instead of going for the traditional fare, why not choose leaner meats?

Some healthy meat alternatives include ground turkey, or skinless chicken breasts. For added taste, soak in a marinade overnight and grill them to get that delicious BBQ taste. This way, you're getting healthy, nutritious food without sacrificing taste.

We all scream for ice cream! As the hot, hazy days of summer go by, often the urge strikes to reach for cool, sweet snacks like ice cream, popsicles and iced coffee drinks. While it's okay to treat yourself to a sundae once in a while, these high calorie treats can quickly become an everyday item. To satisfy your sweet tooth without feeling guilty, look for healthier alternatives. Buy low-fat versions of ice cream or sorbet. Experiment with different brands and remember to control your portions!

Running empty on water? With scorching hot temperatures and increased outdoor activities, more and more people are suffering from dehydration and other heat-related illnesses. It's easy to get caught up in a softball game, but it's extremely important to stay hydrated while engaging in physical activities during summer. If you're mildly to moderately dehydrated, you may begin to feel symptoms such as dry, sticky mouth, thirst, dry skin, dizziness or lightheadedness, and headache. If not treated, these symptoms can lead to a more serious or severe form of dehydration, marked by symptoms such as extreme thirst, lack of sweating, lower blood pressure, rapid breathing, rapid heart rate and loss of consciousness.

To stay hydrated during the summer, keep a bottle of water handy at all times. Place it somewhere you can easily reach for it. Make drinking water a habit by reaching for it at the same times each day.

Summer is a fun season for getting outside in some much-needed warmth. It's also the season when it can be easiest to overlook important things like eating well and staying hydrated.