

A healthy Indian diet should focus on fresh ingredients such as vegetables, fruits, tubers, legumes, whole grains, healthy fats and unsweetened beverages.

Healthy Foods to Eat: Try incorporating the following ingredients into your daily meal plan:

Vegetables: Tomatoes, spinach, eggplant, mustard greens, okra, onions, bitter melon, cauliflower, mushrooms, cabbage and more

Fruits: Including mango, papaya, pomegranate, guava, oranges, tamarind, lychee, apples, melon, pears, plums, bananas

Nuts and seeds: Cashews, almonds, peanuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, watermelon seeds and more

Legumes: Mung beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils, pulses and chickpeas

Roots and tubers: Potatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes, turnips, yams

Whole grains: Brown rice, basmati rice, millet, buckwheat, quinoa, barley, corn, whole-grain bread, amaranth, sorghum

Dairy: Cheese, yogurt, milk, kefir, ghee

Herbs and spices: Garlic, ginger, cardamom, cumin, coriander, garam masala, paprika, turmeric, black pepper, fenugreek, basil and more

Healthy fats: Coconut milk, full-fat dairy, avocado, coconut oil, mustard oil, olive oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, ghee

Protein sources: Tofu, legumes, dairy, nuts and seeds

- Meals and snacks should focus on fresh, whole foods flavored with herbs and spices.
- Additionally, adding non-starchy vegetables like greens, eggplants or tomatoes to your meals will provide a boost of fiber that can help you feel satisfied for a longer period of time after eating.

What to Drink

An easy way to cut back on excess calories and sugar is to avoid sugar-sweetened beverages and juices. These drinks can be high in both calories and sugar, which can negatively affect weight loss.

Healthy beverage options include:

- Water
- Sparkling water
- Unsweetened tea including Darjeeling, Assam and Nilgiri teas

Unhealthy Foods to Avoid

- Choosing foods and beverages that are highly processed, loaded with sugar or high in calories can sabotage your weight loss efforts.
- Not only are items like candy, fried foods and soda not good for weight loss — they aren't good for overall health.
- Eating too much processed food and products laden with sweeteners can increase the risk of chronic diseases.
- For example, drinking sugar-sweetened beverages like soda, fruit punch and juices every day has been associated with increased risks of diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

For optimal health, minimize the following foods or avoid them altogether:

- Sweetened beverages: Soda, fruit juice, sweetened tea, sweet lassi, sports drinks
- High-sugar foods: Candy, ice cream, cookies, rice pudding, pastries, cakes, sweetened yogurt, high-sugar cereals, digestive biscuits
- Sweeteners: Jaggery, sugar, honey, condensed milk
- Sweetened sauces: Salad dressings with added sugar, ketchup, barbecue sauce, sweetened curries
- High-fat foods: Fast food like McDonald's, french fries, chips, fried foods, bhujia
- Refined grains: Products including white bread, white pasta, biscuits
- Trans fats: Margarine, vanaspati, fast food, highly processed foods
- Refined oils: Canola oil, soybean oil, corn oil, grapeseed oil

Although it's perfectly fine to enjoy an occasional treat, limiting the foods and beverages listed above is best for overall health.

Below is a healthy one-week Indian sample menu that focuses on fresh, nutritious food.

You can adjust it according to your calorie needs, dietary restrictions and food preferences.

Monday

Breakfast: Sambar with brown rice idli

Lunch: Whole-grain roti with mixed-vegetable curry

Dinner: Tofu curry with mixed vegetables and a fresh spinach salad

Tuesday

Breakfast: Chana dal pancakes with mixed vegetables and a glass of milk

Lunch: Chickpea curry with brown rice

Dinner: Khichdi with sprout salad

Wednesday

Breakfast: Apple cinnamon porridge made with milk and topped with sliced almonds

Lunch: Whole-grain roti with tofu and mixed vegetables

Dinner: Palak paneer with brown rice and vegetables

Thursday

Breakfast: Yogurt with sliced fruits and sunflower seeds

Lunch: Whole-grain roti with vegetable subji

Dinner: Chana masala with basmati rice and green salad

Friday

Breakfast: Vegetable dalia and a glass of milk

Lunch: Vegetable sambar with brown rice

Dinner: Tofu curry with potato and mixed vegetables

Saturday

Breakfast: Multigrain parathas with avocado and sliced papaya

Lunch: Large salad with rajma curry and quinoa

Dinner: Lentil pancakes with tofu tikka masala

Sunday

Breakfast: Buckwheat porridge with sliced mango

Lunch: Vegetable soup with whole-grain roti

Dinner: Masala-baked tofu with vegetable curry

Drinking water, seltzer or unsweetened tea with and between meals will keep you hydrated without adding extra calories.

Make sure to consume plenty of non-starchy vegetables at every meal, as well as sources of healthy fat and protein.

This will keep you feeling full throughout the day and reduce the chances of overeating.