



Unlock the Potential of Food

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How Can I Eat a More Sustainable Diet?

You've probably heard of people and food products trying to be more sustainable, but you may have also heard conflicting advice on what that means. Read on to find out what it means to eat sustainably and five simple ways you can get started today.

What is a sustainable diet?

Defining a sustainable diet can be complicated, but generally sustainable diets are:

- Healthy and meet people's nutrition needs
- Good for the environment
- Culturally acceptable
- Affordable and easy to access
- An effective way to reduce food waste
- Protective of biodiversity and ecosystems
- Produced in a way that is fair and equitable to workers in the food system

All these factors can be difficult to translate into what foods to buy at the grocery store and what to actually eat. A dietitian can help you make sense of all the recommendations and will consider your personal goals to create an eating plan that works for you. In the meantime, try these 5 tips to get you started on eating more sustainably.

Top 5 ways to eat more sustainably

1. Choose plant-based proteins more often.

Compared to animal proteins, plant-based proteins require less land, energy and water to produce. Eating more plant-based protein is also good for your health as these foods are a good source of fibre, vitamins and antioxidants as well as lower in saturated fat. Another added bonus is that plant-based proteins are often less expensive too!

Here are some examples of ways to add more plant-based protein to your diet:

- Substitute lentils for ground beef In any recipe, like spaghetti Bolognese, lasagne, stuffed peppers or cabbage rolls.
- Add beans and chickpeas to soups, salads and stews.
- Use firm tofu to make veggie and tofu skewers that you can grill on the BBQ.
- Add a handful of nuts and seeds to your morning oatmeal or enjoy as an afternoon snack.
- Make fruit smoothies using fortified soy beverage instead of milk.

Want more ideas? Check out our article on [plant-based eating](#) at UnlockFood.ca.

2. Reduce food waste.

Did you know that about 60% of food produced in Canada is lost or wasted? There are lots of ways you can reduce your household's food waste. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Plan your meals for the week and make a grocery list. When you plan your meals in advance, you can make sure to incorporate any foods you already have in the fridge and pantry to reduce waste. It also ensures that you buy just what you need for the week.
- Plan meals that include some of the same foods. For example, if you open a can of beans to make a salad, plan to make a [bean chili](#) the next day using the leftover beans.
- Use frozen foods more often. One of the benefits of frozen foods is that you can use just as much as you need for a recipe. For example, if you are making a stir-fry, instead of using only half a head of fresh broccoli and throwing out the rest, you can grab just as much frozen broccoli as you need without the waste.
- Use leftovers to create new meals. Check out our recipe e-book featuring [easy meals for great leftovers](#). Watch this video which turns [glazed trout and roasted vegetables into a delicious seafood chowder](#) the next day (found on UnlockFood.ca).

3. Drink tap water.

Drinking tap water instead of bottled is an easy way to make an environmentally-friendly choice. Not only will you be cutting back on single-use plastic waste, you will also be reducing the emissions that are used to transport heavy bottled liquids to the store.

Don't like the taste of plain water? Try adding lemon, lime or other fruits to add taste. You can also be creative and add herbs like mint for additional flavour.

Note: Some communities may have drinking water advisories for tap water (like a boil water advisory). Always follow your local public health recommendations.

4. Buy local, field grown produce.

Not only does buying local support farmers and help the local economy, it also cuts down on the transportation needed for the food to get on your plate. Get to know your local farmers by visiting Farmers' Markets. Talk to them about how they grow their food, what food is seasonally available and when.

5. Grow your own food.

Growing your own food is a great way to learn about food and sustainability. Kids love to help in the garden and watch how food grows. Home gardens also help reduce the emissions from transportation. Even if you don't have a big space, you can still grow some of your own food –

try an indoor herb garden to start. Experiment with different recipes that use local food and herbs.

Other things you can do:

- Breastfeed your baby if possible.
- Eat less processed foods – processed foods go through many steps which increases the energy and resources needed to produce them. Eating less processed foods is also good for your health.
- Choose certified fish when possible and eat a variety of fish species.
- Continue to learn about sustainability and look for opportunities in your community to make a difference (for example, reducing food waste in your workplace).

How can a dietitian help?

A dietitian can work with you to personalize an eating plan that is right for you. Dietitians consider many things when providing advice, like your personal goals, culture, budget, medical history and sustainability. Dietitians can support you throughout many phases of your life from pregnancy to eating well when you are older. Most employee health benefit plans cover dietitian services. Connect with a dietitian today!

Bottom line

Eating more sustainably can seem daunting, but there are simple steps you can take today. By eating more plant-based, buying local, field grown produce, drinking tap water, reducing food waste, and starting a small garden, you can be on your way to eating more sustainably.

Visit www.NutritionMonth2023.ca for more on how to connect with a dietitian and for trusted food and nutrition information.