

- Eating customs

Are you in the 'food is life!' club? Or are you mainly about giving your body what it needs to run? Both are legit! But either way, it's well proven that a balanced diet provides essential nutrients that keep all our organs, muscles, bones, skin and eyes as healthy as possible. So, there's almost nothing more important than finding workable good-eating habits – and that's why we asked our go-to nutrition experts

for their best tips and tricks for a healthy, happy approach to food.

Good, sustainable nutrition is a lifestyle. "There's no quick fix – people want nutrition to be slick and sexy, but it's not," says dietitian Vanessa Rissetto. "It's a long-term practice – it's about creating better habits and understanding how certain foods and nutrients affect the way you feel." This doesn't have to be overwhelming or all-consuming; start by identifying just one small change that you can make today and keep adding more each week.

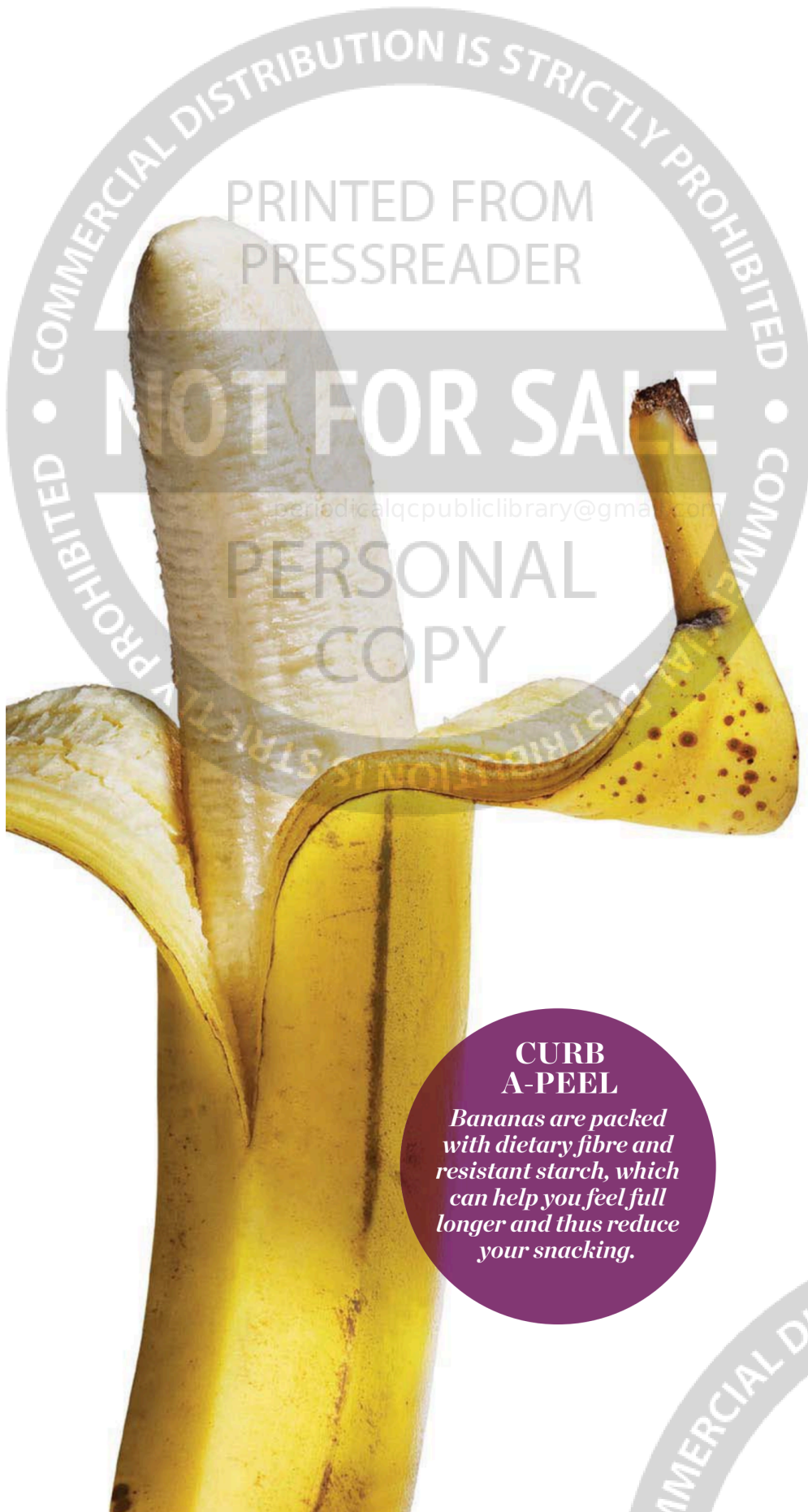


Healthy eating HACKS

A plateful of pro tips on making eating well easier, yummier and more nutritious.

BY ALYSSA JUNG

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Bananas are packed with dietary fibre and resistant starch, which can help you feel full longer and thus reduce your snacking.

Start your day with protein

“You’ll feel fuller longer and your blood sugar will be more stable, which helps with sustained energy and steady mood,” says dietitian Vandana Sheth. Have yoghurt, eggs, tofu scramble, or a smoothie bowl topped with nuts and seeds – any of these is a great protein-rich brekkie to fuel you.

Freeze leftovers individually, not in bulk

“Divide leftovers into ‘TV dinners’, as it saves you from thawing huge portions and refreezing what you don’t eat, which can degrade food quality,” says dietitian Jessica Jones. Food quality is an important part of making sure your meal is satisfying and delicious!

Chew (don’t drink) your meals and snacks

A smoothie or a protein shake is a smart pick in a pinch, but, whenever possible, choose the whole-food versions of fruit, veggies and protein for a between-meals pick-me-up. ▶

HEALTHY EATING

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"There's research to support the idea that actually chewing your food versus drinking it in the form of juices or shakes is more satiety-promoting, and my personal experience as a clinician has fully supported this notion," says dietitian Jaclyn London, a nutrition consultant.

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Go-to flavour builders

The better your food tastes, the more satisfying the bite. That's why dietitians Jaclyn London and Valerie Agyeman love to keep the following products on hand to create healthy, delicious meals.

- 1 A variety of condiments.** Hot sauce, mustard, spice blend seasonings and toppings, such as sriracha, will tickle your tongue and keep things interesting.
- 2 Strongly flavoured cheese.** Opt for the full-fat version of soft (goat, feta, ricotta) or hard (parmesan, pecorino romano, gruyère) cheeses to add wonderful flavour and a hint of salt to your plates.
- 3 Broths.** Stock up on low-salt or salt-free chicken, mushroom, veggie, beef or fish broth. You can cook grains in it or use it to build and flavour sauces.
- 4 Infused oils.** You can steep rosemary, sage, thyme, garlic, citrus or chilli peppers in olive oil, and then drizzle the flavoured oil over dishes just before serving. Or, grab an infused bottle online or at a specialty food store.
- 5 Pickled veggies.** Tangy pickled or fermented onions, carrots or cucumbers enhance flavour and add crunchy texture. Plus, they're packed full of minerals and vitamins.
- 6 Nut and seed butters.** Think almond, peanut and sunflower seed butter and tahini; they're a good way to get fibre, protein and healthy fats and can be used to make creamy dressings, dips or sauces.
- 7 Dried fruit.** It adds sweetness and fibre. Look for brands without added sugar, and get creative by thinking beyond porridge and yoghurt and adding to salads or veggie dishes.
- 8 Roasted whole garlic cloves.** Stick a big batch in the oven until they're soft and caramelised, and then keep in an airtight container to add richness and sweetness to meals.

Try umami

Asian staples such as nori, kelp and wakame are nutritious (filled with essential vitamins and minerals) and bring bold umami flavour (a pleasant savoury taste) that can help you cut back on sodium – a smart move for your heart, kidneys and bones. "Look for furikake, kelp or dulce flakes and add them to rice, salads, popcorn or toast," suggests dietitian Sherene Chou, co-founder of foodandplanet.org.

Treat yourself to a fun water bottle

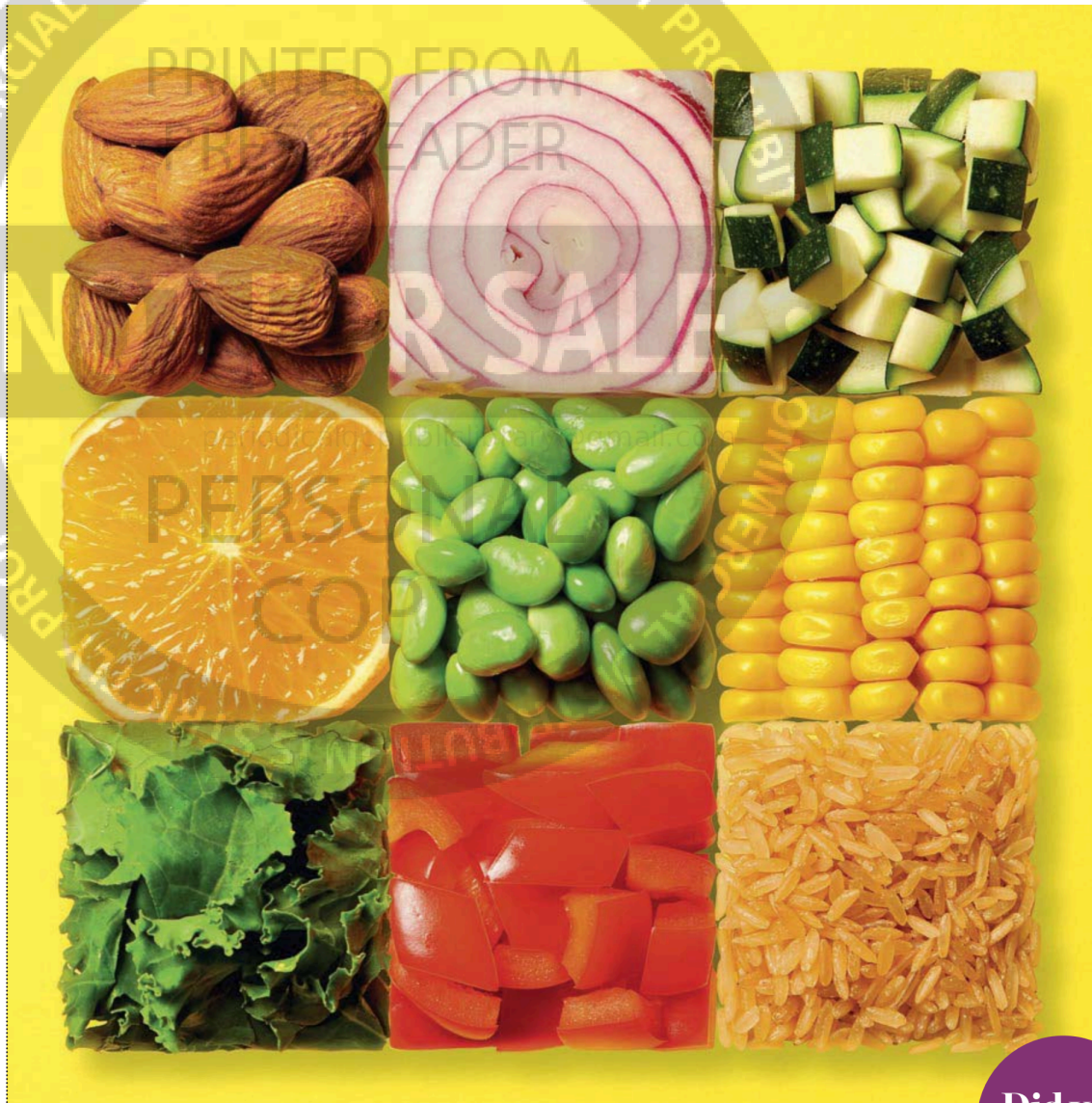
"A water bottle with encouraging messages, time markers for tracking, or a straw can make drinking enough H₂O more appealing," says dietitian Valerie Agyeman. Staying hydrated helps the body function properly and keeps away dehydration signs like headache, mood swings and a slump in energy.

Tap into your childhood

"I like using food moulds or cookie cutters to make pancakes, sandwiches and more into shapes for special occasions," says dietitian Sue-Ellen Anderson-Haynes. You can also find ice cube trays in cool shapes to add pizzazz to your day!

Master the table-chair trick

One of the easiest ways to put mindful eating into practice is to commit to eating all your meals from a plate while seated at a table. "This helps prevent you from mindlessly overeating, and you enjoy your food more than if you're watching TV, working at your desk, or nibbling near the fridge," says dietitian Dawn Jackson Blatner.



SMOOTH MEAL PREP

“Don’t overthink it – meal prep is what you make it,” says dietitian Marisa Moore. Try some of her favourite tricks for making it less of a hassle.

- › **Play music.** It’s a mood lifter, and if meal prep feels like a chore, bopping to a good playlist can offer a bit of distraction. Or cue up a podcast or an audiobook instead.
- › **Don’t make huge batches if you know you’ll get bored.** Keep things interesting with your ingredients. For instance, when cooking mince meat, season half for tacos and half for stuffed capsicum.
- › **Only prep a complete meal if you need to** – otherwise, opt for a batch of grains or beans, a big container of roasted veggies, or chopped raw ingredients.
- › **Mix things up by cooking one meal** and then eating half fresh and freezing the rest. You’ll end up with a varied stash of ready-to-eat freezer meals.
- › **Prep snacks or breakfast instead of lunch or dinner.** Layer jars with yoghurt, fruit and nuts for brekkie. Or fill containers with hummus (or another dip) and a medley of vegie sticks to have an easy, nutritious snack handy. ▶

Did you know?

Meal prepping is associated with a lower risk of being overweight or obese.

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BEHAVIORAL NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY