

# Tips to help you make wise choices from the Meat and Beans Group

Adapted from USDA's MyPyramid.gov

## Go lean with protein

### Start with a lean choice:

- ◆ The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts.
- ◆ The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham.
- ◆ Choose extra lean ground beef. The label should say at least "90% lean". You may be able to find ground beef that is 93% or 95% lean.
- ◆ Buy skinless chicken parts, or take off the skin before cooking.
- ◆ Boneless skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices.
- ◆ Choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham, or low-fat luncheon meats for sandwiches instead of luncheon meats with more fat, such as regular bologna or salami.

### Keep it lean:

- ◆ Trim away all of the visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking.
- ◆ Broil, grill, roast, poach, or boil meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying.
- ◆ Drain off any fat that appears during cooking.
- ◆ Skip or limit the breading on meat, poultry, or fish. Breading adds fat and calories. It will also cause the food to soak up more fat during frying.

- ◆ Prepare dry beans and peas without added fats.
- ◆ Choose and prepare foods without high fat sauces or gravies.

## Vary your protein choices

Choose fish more often for lunch or dinner. Look for fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, and herring.

Some ideas are:

- ◆ Salmon steak or filet
- ◆ Salmon loaf
- ◆ Grilled or baked trout

Choose dry beans or peas as a main dish or part of a meal often. Some choices are:

- ◆ Chili with kidney or pinto beans
- ◆ Stir-fried tofu
- ◆ Split pea, lentil, minestrone or white bean soups
- ◆ Baked beans
- ◆ Black bean enchiladas
- ◆ Garbanzo or kidney beans on a chef's salad
- ◆ Rice and beans
- ◆ Veggie burgers or garden burgers
- ◆ Hummus (chickpeas) spread on pita bread

Choose nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to these items:

- ◆ Use pine nuts in pesto sauce for pasta.



- ◆ Add slivered almonds to steamed vegetables.
- ◆ Add toasted peanuts or cashews to a vegetable stir fry instead of meat.
- ◆ Sprinkle a few nuts on top of low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt.
- ◆ Add walnuts or pecans to a green salad instead of cheese or meat.

## What to look for on the Food Label

Check the Nutrition Facts label for the saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and sodium content of packaged foods.

- ◆ Processed meats such as hams, sausages, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added sodium. Check the ingredient and Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake.
- ◆ Fresh chicken, turkey, and pork that have been enhanced with a salt-containing solution also have added sodium. Check the product label for statements such as “self-basting” or “contains up to \_\_\_% of \_\_\_.”
- ◆ Lower fat versions of many processed meats are available. Look on the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less fat and saturated fat.

## Keep it safe to eat

- ◆ Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods.

- ◆ Do not wash or rinse meat or poultry.
- ◆ Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and counter tops in hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next one.
- ◆ Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices don't drip onto other foods.
- ◆ Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms. Use a meat thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through.
- ◆ Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- ◆ Plan ahead to defrost foods. Never defrost food on the kitchen counter at room temperature. Thaw food by placing it in the refrigerator, submerging air-tight packaged food in cold tap water, or defrosting on a plate in the microwave.
- ◆ Avoid raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs and raw or undercooked meat and poultry.
- ◆ Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children should avoid some types of fish and eat types lower in mercury. See [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html) or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD for more information.

