



**Registered Dietitians**  
Department of  
Veterans Affairs  
*Leading the way to better health*

# Grocery Shopping Guidelines

**Here are some tips to help make your grocery shopping experience a healthy one.**




- Do not shop when you are hungry. Have a snack (or meal) before grocery shopping to prevent impulse buying.
- Plan ahead. Make a grocery list and stick to it. This will help control spending and increase the chance of buying healthy items.
- Shop the perimeter of the store. This is where you will find fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, whole grain breads, and low-fat dairy.


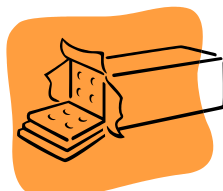
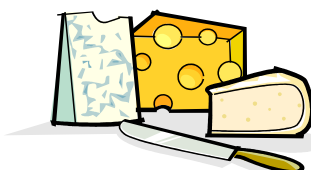


- Read your food labels. This will help you identify healthier options. Remember to look at the calories and serving sizes.
- Try a new food like a unique fruit or vegetable or whole grain.
- Avoid tempting aisles. Generally, these are the inner isles of the grocery store.
- Buy individual serving sizes of snack foods to avoid overeating.
- Shop in the morning when the grocery store is less busy. You will be able to make selections quicker that can decrease the temptation of selecting snack foods while waiting to check out.
- Skip the free samples. Remember extra calories can be slowly consumed bite by bite throughout the day.



**The following pages provide helpful suggestions for you to make healthier choices when grocery shopping**

<p><b>Fruits &amp; Vegetables</b></p>  <p>Drain and rinse liquid from canned vegetables to reduce sodium</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fresh, frozen, or canned in own juice</li><li>• Variety of fruits and vegetables</li><li>• Colorful fruits and vegetables, especially dark green and orange</li></ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fresh, frozen fruits and vegetables</li><li>• Canned fruits with low-sugar or light syrup</li><li>• Low-sodium or non-sodium canned vegetables</li></ul>
<p><b>Bread, Muffins, &amp; Rolls</b></p> 	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less than 2 grams of fat per serving</li><li>• At least 3 grams fiber per serving</li><li>• "Whole" grain or "bran" should be listed as first ingredient on the food label</li></ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole wheat, stone ground wheat, whole meal, cracked wheat or rye flour, or bran</li><li>• Low-fat tortillas</li><li>• Whole grain tortilla</li><li>• Fat-free biscuits</li><li>• Whole grain English muffins</li><li>• Bagel (size of hockey puck)</li></ul>
<p><b>Cereal</b></p>  <p>Beware of flavored instant cereal for their sugar and salt content</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less than 5 grams of sugar per serving</li><li>• 3 or more grams of fiber per serving</li><li>• 2 grams or less of fat per serving</li></ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most ready-to-eat cereals except pre-sweetened &amp; granola types</li><li>• Cooked cereal – regular and quick cooking varieties</li><li>• High fiber or bran cereals</li></ul>

<p><b>Pasta, Rice, &amp; Other Grains</b></p> 	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Whole" grain varieties</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brown rice and wild rice</li> <li>• Whole grain pasta</li> </ul>
<p><b>Crackers, Cookies &amp; Snacks</b></p>  <p>Beware of trans fats and / or partially hydrogenated oils</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 grams or less of fat per serving</li> <li>• Whole grain</li> <li>• High fiber items</li> <li>• 100 Calorie Packs® (to help control portion size)</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crackers:</b> graham, saltine, oyster, bread sticks</li> <li>• <b>Cookies:</b> animal crackers, ginger snaps, fig bars, vanilla wafers</li> <li>• <b>Snacks:</b> popcorn (air-popped, low-fat, or light), pretzels, rice cakes, baked potato chips, baked tortilla chips, high fiber cereal bars</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cheese</b></p> 	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part or all skim milk cheeses</li> <li>• Less than 5 grams of fat per ounce</li> <li>• Low-fat, reduced fat, light, or fat-free cheese</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-fat or non-fat cottage cheese</li> <li>• Part skim mozzarella, ricotta, or farmers cheese</li> <li>• String cheese</li> </ul>

## Milk & Yogurt



Look for extra calories from added sugar in yogurt

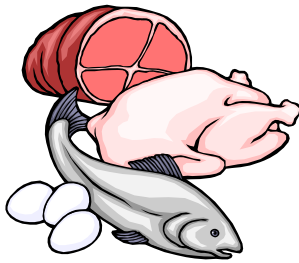
### Look for:

- Low-fat or non-fat products

### Choose more:

- Skim or 1% milk
- Low-fat buttermilk
- Evaporated skim milk
- Nonfat dry milk powder
- Low-fat chocolate milk
- Low-fat or fat-free yogurt

## Meat, Poultry, Fish, & Meat Substitutes

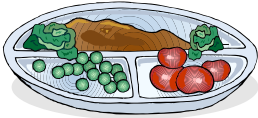





### Look for:

- Leaner cuts with less marbling
- Select or choice grades of meat
- Skinless chicken or turkey breast
- Extra lean ground beef, such as ground round
- 95%-97% fat-free lunch meat or low-fat deli meats
- Less than 3 grams of fat per ounce of processed meat

### Choose more:

- Round or loin cuts: top loin, top round, tenderloin
- Fresh or frozen shellfish, without breading
- Canned tuna or salmon packed in water
- Fresh ground turkey meat (white meat) or chicken
- White meat (breast or wing) from poultry
- Poultry without breading (remove skin before eating)
- Egg substitutes and egg whites
- Lentils and beans (navy, pinto), non-fat refried beans
- Soy products such as tofu, tempeh, or edamame

<p><b>Canned or Frozen Dinner Entrées</b></p> 	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more than 10 grams of fat per serving</li> <li>• Less than 600 mg sodium</li> <li>• Aim for less than 500 calories per meal</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dinners that include vegetables and lean meats</li> </ul>
<p><b>Soups</b></p> 	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 grams of fat or less per serving</li> <li>• Broth or tomato based soups</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low fat soups</li> <li>• Low sodium varieties</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fats, Oils, &amp; Dressing</b></p>  <p>Beware of trans fats and/or partially hydrogenated oils</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-stick cooking sprays</li> <li>• Pump spray butter &amp; salad dressings</li> <li>• Fat-free or reduced-fat varieties</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced-fat margarine and spreads</li> <li>• Non-fat or reduced-fat salad dressing</li> <li>• Non-fat or reduced-fat sour cream</li> <li>• Olive or canola oils</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desserts</b></p>  <p>Consume in moderation</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 3 grams of fat per 100 calorie serving</li> </ul> <p><b>Choose more:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit for dessert</li> <li>• Sugar-free gelatin</li> <li>• Sugar-free pudding</li> <li>• Fat-free pudding</li> </ul>

**Contact your local VA dietitian for more information.**