

Clean Eating

Nutrition Challenge



Most of us have heard the term “Clean Eating”, but are you really familiar with what it means?

Clean eating is a way of eating that focuses on foods as close to their natural state as possible. That means cutting out processed/packaged foods, added sugars (those not naturally occurring in foods such as fruit and dairy) and concentrating on fresh produce, whole grains and lean protein. For some, this may seem like a huge change in eating habits, but once you have adopted this plan you may find the added health benefits outweigh any inconvenience.

So, let’s get started on our way to clean eating. To complete the challenge for this month, follow the guidelines below. Aim to meet each of the guidelines every day. Practicing clean eating as much as possible should have you feeling better and more energetic by the end of the month.

1. **Avoid Packaged & Processed Foods.** One of the main foundations of clean eating is cutting out and avoiding processed foods. Doing so will prevent the consumption of unhealthy and sometimes very harmful additives. Processed foods are hard on your body and have been connected to serious health complications, including cardiovascular disease and obesity.

When you think of what is considered a “processed” food some things are obvious. Items such as cookies and chips are obviously processed, but less obvious items such as white bread and white rice are also processed and should be avoided. The whole grain versions of rice and bread are much better choices.

2. **Eat Several Small Meals and Snacks each Day** A clean eating staple involves eating several small healthy meals a day, either 5 or 6, instead of 3 big meals. Some benefits of eating this way include improving your metabolism through the extra work required to digest food more frequently and maintaining blood sugar levels. It can also prevent overeating because you won’t feel starving at your next meal, causing you to eat more than your body needs. It provides your body regular nourishment to keep you energized and satiated throughout the day.

Some people think that eating a small meal won’t satisfy them, but if you eat the right foods and give your body time to adjust to the new meal schedule, you should be fine. One key tip to clean eating that will help with feeling full and for longer is to include foods with fiber in your small meals. Eating fresh vegetables is a major part of clean eating and there are many veggies that contain a high amount of fiber, so you shouldn’t feel hungry.

3. **Eat your vegetables.** You probably heard this growing up and if you have kids, you've probably said it to them, too. There's a reason vegetables are considered a key part of a healthy diet and it's recommended you get several servings of them each day—they're supremely healthy. Vegetables are packed full of nutrients and other sought-after properties that can greatly improve health, protect you from illness, and give your body what it needs to not only survive but thrive. The nutritional properties of vegetables vary, but many are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, and folic acid, all of which contribute to good health.

There's an impossibly long list of health benefits from eating fresh vegetables, from giving you energy, improving digestion, and protecting your skin and eyes to potentially reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and many types of cancer. Many vegetables are considered superfoods because of these amazing health benefits, so stock up and eat them regularly. Eating fresh vegetables is a definite to-do for clean eating and you'll see and feel the benefits of these powerful foods.

4. **Eat Whole Grains** -Whole grains are seriously good for you, yet processed foods containing grains don't contain many of the nutrients that make whole grains healthy because certain components are removed. To eat clean in regards to grains, you need to make sure that whatever grain-based food you're buying actually says the word 'whole' before the grain, like whole wheat flour. If you don't look at the ingredient list and just assume that a product is whole grain, you'll probably eat foods that just have wheat flour and you'll be missing out on some of the good stuff.

There are many other whole grains and whole grain products that are finally fairly mainstream, such as quinoa, buckwheat, rye, and brown rice, increasing your options for including whole grains in your diet. These popular and healthy alternatives use whole grains for all kinds of baking and cooking. And to top it off, according to the Mayo Clinic whole grains are not only good for you, they're an essential part of a healthy diet and have been linked to decreasing the risk of heart disease and other serious medical conditions.

A tip to make clean eating a little easier is to grocery shop strategically. If you consider how grocery stores are typically laid out, you'll notice that most of the items packaged items. Those in boxes, jars, and other packaging, as well as frozen items are located in the inner aisles of the store. If you stick to shopping the perimeter of your grocery store, you'll pretty much avoid the worst processed foods.

Challenge yourself this month to practice clean eating as many days as possible. Pay attention to how you feel at the beginning of the month, prior to starting a clean eating regimen, and then once you have completed a month of clean eating. I think you will really notice a difference.

Name_____

Month Completed_____

Harker School Wellness Program / **Clean Eating Nutrition Challenge**

Track and record the clean eating guidelines you met each day. Aim to meet each of the 4 guidelines every day – please log how many of the guidelines you met for the day. Submit completed log to HR to earn 10 wellness points. (100 points max in this category)

Week 1

Day 1 _____
Day 2 _____
Day 3 _____
Day 4 _____
Day 5 _____
Day 6 _____
Day 7 _____

Week 2

Day 8 _____
Day 9 _____
Day 10 _____
Day 11 _____
Day 12 _____
Day 13 _____
Day 14 _____

Week 3

Day 15 _____
Day 16 _____
Day 17 _____
Day 18 _____
Day 19 _____
Day 20 _____
Day 21 _____

Week 4

Day 22 _____
Day 23 _____
Day 24 _____
Day 25 _____
Day 26 _____
Day 27 _____
Day 28 _____

Signature_____ Date_____

I, the employee named above, guarantee that the information contained in this verification is true and accurate and I understand that HR may verify any forms submitted for the purpose of obtaining a wellness discount. I understand that any inaccurate and/or false statements on this form may lead to the loss of all or a portion of my wellness discount.

To receive credit, this form must be submitted to HR within 30 days of completion and no later than December 5, 2019.