

Q. What goes into a healthy green salad?

A. A green salad made the right way can add fruits and vegetables to your daily diet. It's one reason salad tops the list on just about every diet plan ever created. It's high in vitamins and nutrients. And it's low in calories ... with the right kind of dressing.

Munch on this ... Only about 9 percent of adults eat enough vegetables. And just 12 percent eat enough fruit.¹ But you need about 1.5 to 2 cups of fruit, and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day² Toss a few of both into a salad and you're on your way to better health. Eating salad is a great way to control calories, feel fuller longer, and add more whole foods to your diet.³

Here's how to build a healthy green salad:

1. Begin with leafy-greens

Skip the iceberg lettuce. Those pale-colored leaves don't contain the vitamins and nutrients found in other lettuce or greens. Start with romaine lettuce, spinach, kale, arugula, or a mix of leafy-greens.

2. Add some crunch to munch

No, that doesn't mean croutons, tortilla chips, or chow mein noodles. They're high in fat, sodium, and calories. Instead, add nuts, seeds, and raw veggies. Try diced celery, fresh broccoli florets, or pumpkin seeds. Sprinkle pine nuts, slivered almonds, walnut pieces, or pecans on top.



3. Brighten the bowl

Who says green salad has to be a pile of bland-tasting leaves? It doesn't. Add some bright colors and tastes to your salad bowl – sliced, diced, or whole:

- Red onions
- Strawberries
- Tomatoes
- Blackberries
- Avocado
- Blueberries
- Beets
- Blackberries
- Apples
- Pomegranate seeds
- Pears
- Red, yellow, and orange peppers
- Oranges
- Peaches

4. Pick a protein

- Your body needs protein to build strong bones and muscles, and support other functions. And it's easy to add it to a salad.
- **Beans:** Try canned black beans, garbanzos, or pintos. Rinse first.

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- **Meat or fish:** Try chicken, turkey, salmon, or tuna.
- **Other protein-rich options** include hard-boiled eggs (sliced), tofu, or low-fat cheese like feta, mozzarella, or parmesan. And don't forget about nuts and seeds.

5. Dress for success

Here's a hint. Skip the creamy salad dressings. For example, a typical serving of ranch dressing on a salad can add 150 to 300 calories. Instead, use salad dressings made with lemon or lime juice, red wine, balsamic vinegar, or olive oil.

Be a salad artist

These basic ideas will help you build a healthy green salad. But don't stop there. Use a recipe, or a little creativity, to make your own salads. You'll feel better, be healthier, and lower your risk for chronic disease.

1. References

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2. U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yvdr5zx9>
3. Roe, L., et al. (2012). Salad and satiety: The effect of timing of salad consumption on meal energy intake. *Appetite*, 58(1): 242-248. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y6ada3o7>

