

## The 2022 National Nutrition Month (NNM) theme this year is:

What a great chance to learn more about your own food culture as well as others that you have always wanted to try!

By incorporating different recipes from a culture you haven't tried before will help include wonderful new flavors into your healthy eating routine.

Other cultures than your own may have different fruits and vegetables than you are used to and will lend a variety of foods you eat and will help you get the nutrients that you need for good health.

Don't just stop after the month is over! Keep adding new and different foods to your diet to keep things exciting.

### Let's start with breakfast (or the first meal of your day).

- Blend up a smoothie and add tropical fruits like papaya or mango
- Congee, a Chinese rice porridge, that can be served plain for with vegetables and a protein, like chicken or fish
- Scottish oatmeal or bulgur with your choice of milk and topped off with fruit and nuts or a spoonful of nut butter
- Za'atar mixed with a little olive oil and spread on a whole wheat pita, topped with tomato, olives, cucumber, and mint



## Food and Drink: The Impact on Health

Each person's body is different. Choosing healthy foods and drinks can help you do the following:

**Reduce Pain and Inflammation** – A diet high in fruits, vegetables, and fiber can help to reduce chronic inflammation and pain. Anti-inflammatory spices include rosemary, turmeric, sage, ginger, and cumin and can be incorporated into many recipes.

**Manage Weight** – More and more people are not at a healthy weight. Also important is that extra weight may lower the quality of your life. If you carry extra weight, you may not be able to do everything that you want to do. The foods we eat and the amounts we eat may impact our ability to lose weight or manage our weight.

**Improve Gut Health** – Our intestines contain over 100 trillion bacteria. Many of these bacteria aid in digestion and help prevent infections. Poor nutrition can kill the good bacteria. Probiotic foods (such as yogurt and kefir) contain live micro-organisms and can improve the balance of bacteria in your intestines.

**Maintain or Improve Your Mood and Behavior** – The way we eat affects our mental health and behavior. A large study found that eating whole foods (fruits, vegetables, and fish) helped prevent depression. Eating a diet of processed meat, chocolates, sweet desserts, fried food, refined cereals, and high-fat dairy products increased risk for depression.

**Influence Your Sleep** – Foods and drinks with caffeine can make going to sleep a challenge. If you do not sleep enough or have poor sleep, you may eat food that is less healthy and have a harder time losing weight.

## Mindful Eating

You have probably sat in front of the television and demolished a bag of chips or entire bowl of popcorn and then wondered where it went? We have all done it. Our mind is certainly not on what we are eating!

Mindful eating is about being aware of how you feel when you eat. It involves paying attention to the color, smell, taste, and texture of food. Mindful eating cannot only help us to eat less if attempting to lose weight, but it can also help us enjoy the foods we consume more. [Give it a try!](#)

## Do you want to become more active?

Activity can lower the risk of depression, diabetes, and heart disease. It can also help you manage your weight and feel better. Your VA Medical Center's MOVE! Program can help you sit less and move more. With MOVE!, you can set movement goals and receive support to reach them. If this sounds like the right fit for you, contact your VA MOVE! Program.



Improve your strength, balance, and flexibility by regularly following the Get Fit for Life Videos at <https://www.move.va.gov/video/>.

## Sleep Well: June Healthy Living Message

Studies suggest that getting a good night's sleep helps your metabolism, which may help you process energy from food and drinks more efficiently and assist with weight management. On the other hand, poor sleep habits may lower your metabolism and has been shown to increase the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and weight gain. When you don't get enough sleep, your body produces more hormones that drive appetite and hunger.

Adults usually need 7-9 quality hours of sleep per night. Even if you think you're sleeping enough hours, if you are waking up frequently during the night, having trouble falling asleep, or waking up too early, you may not be getting a healthy amount of sleep.

Fortunately, there are many things you can do to improve your sleep.

- Keep the same bed/wake time throughout the week and weekend.
- Follow a bedtime routine, which may include turning off electronics (phone, TV, etc.) 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid long naps.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol at least 4 hours before bedtime.
- Limit large meals before bedtime. Instead, have a light snack if needed.
- Get plenty of exposure to natural sunlight during the day to keep your body on a normal sleep-wake cycle.
- Keep your bedroom clean, cool, and dark.

## Chicken Tikka Masala

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 20 minutes-4 hours | Total: 30 minutes-5 hours Yield: 4 servings |



### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 pound (16-ounces) boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into bite sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated (or ½ teaspoon ground ginger)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt added tomato sauce
- 1 cup (½ can) lite coconut milk or 6oz plain Greek yogurt

### Directions

1. Stove-Top: Heat medium sized pot over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon oil. Once hot, add chicken and sauté for 5 minutes. Add ginger, garlic, spices and salt. Sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the tomato sauce. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in the coconut milk or yogurt. Serve warm.
2. Instant Pot/Electric Pressure Cooker: Set to sauté mode. Add oil. Once hot, add chicken. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add ginger, garlic, spices and salt. Sauté for another 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce, stir to combine. Set to manual pressure cook for 10 minutes, then quick release. Stir in coconut milk or yogurt. Serve warm.
3. Slow Cooker/Crockpot: Omit oil. Add chicken, ginger, garlic, spices, salt and tomato sauce to the crockpot. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 8 hours. Turn off, add coconut milk or yogurt. Stir to combine. Serve warm.

1 cup: Carbohydrate: 9 g | Dietary Fiber: 2 g | Protein: 26 g

Submitted by Robin LaCroix RD, CSO

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)