

March 2024

# Live Well, Work Well



## Understanding Your Kidney Health

March is National Kidney Month, making it a great time to take charge of your health by lowering your chances of developing kidney disease. Your kidneys filter your blood to remove waste and extra water to create urine. They also make vital hormones that produce red blood cells, promote bone health and regulate blood pressure. As such, the kidneys play a vital role in your body.

The National Kidney Foundation reports that 1 in 3 adults are at risk for life-threatening kidney disease, but most don't even know it.



### Risk Factors

Kidney disease is a leading cause of death in the United States. Today, 15% of Americans are affected by kidney disease—and most won't have symptoms unless their kidneys fail. There are numerous physical signs of kidney disease, but most people attribute them to other conditions. If you have one of these risk factors, you may be at risk for kidney disease:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Excess weight
- Family history of kidney disease

### Kidney-friendly Lifestyle Tips

Your kidneys work hard for you, so taking good care of them is essential. Consider these tips:

- **Get tested.** Regular screening for kidney damage or disease can allow you to keep track of your kidney's health and help prevent future damage.
- **Reduce over-the-counter drug usage.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen) can cause kidney damage if taken regularly, so never exceed the recommended dosage.
- **Exercise regularly.** Exercising helps lower your blood pressure and boost heart health—both critical factors in preventing kidney damage. Focus on being active for at least 30 minutes a day.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Studies reveal that eating whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables is one of the best ways to keep kidneys healthy. A plant-based diet may also help prevent and treat kidney disease.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Water helps flush sodium and toxins from your kidneys. It's recommended that men should get about 15.5 cups of fluids each day, and women need about 11.5 cups.

Contact your doctor for more information about kidney health and warning signs of kidney disease.

## Important Functions of Protein

Proteins are made up of many building blocks called amino acids and are fundamental for proper body functioning and good health. Recognizing the multifaceted importance of protein underscores the need to incorporate protein sources into your diet to maintain optimal health and function across various bodily systems.

Protein plays a crucial role in the following body functions:

- **Growth and maintenance**—Proteins are instrumental in the regeneration and repair of organ and muscle tissues.
- **Communication**—Some proteins are hormones and act as chemical messengers between cells, tissues and organs.
- **Storage and transportation**—Some proteins transport nutrients (e.g., vitamins and minerals), cholesterol and oxygen throughout your entire body, while others store them.
- **Fluid balance**—Proteins in your blood maintain the fluid balance between your blood and the surrounding tissues.
- **Immune health**—Antibodies and other components in your immune system are proteins that fight infections and disease.

Collectively, these functions make protein one of the most important nutrients for your body. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about your diet.



## Preparing for Tax-filing Season

Tax season is here, so if you haven't done so already, it's time to gather all the appropriate information you need to file your 2023 tax returns. The federal tax deadline is April 15, 2024. Many people elect to file their tax returns electronically; this can be done in various ways, such as using tax preparation software or consulting a tax professional. If you are filing with a paper form, there are certain documents you must be sure to include.

The documentation needed for your tax filing may vary based on your employment status over the past year. It's critical to consult with a tax professional with specific questions about your tax-filing situation.

*Makes: 4 servings*

### Ingredients

- 1 cup broccoli (cooked and chopped)
- 4 English muffins
- 1 cup pizza sauce
- ½ cup part-skim mozzarella cheese (shredded)
- 4 Tbsp. carrot (shredded)
- 1 tsp. Parmesan cheese (grated)

### Preparations

1. Put the chopped broccoli in a saucepan with water and cook on medium until tender.
2. Drain the water from the saucepan. Let the broccoli cool.
3. Cut the four English muffins in half. Toast all muffin halves.
4. Spoon 2 Tbsp. pizza sauce over each English muffin half.
5. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. shredded mozzarella cheese on each half.
6. Put 2 Tbsp. broccoli and 1 tsp. shredded carrots on each half.
7. Sprinkle each half with 1 tsp. grated parmesan cheese.
8. Toast the English muffin halves in a toaster oven for 2 minutes until the cheese melts.

### Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total calories	220
Total fat	5 g
Protein	11 g
Sodium	576 mg
Carbohydrate	34 g
Dietary fiber	4 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	5 g

*Source: MyPlate*

# Take Charge of Your Health



## Eat a Well-balanced Diet

Consuming a well-balanced diet is essential to leading a healthy life. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, aims to provide advice on what to eat and drink to build a healthy diet that can promote healthy growth and development, help prevent diet-related chronic disease and meet nutrient needs.

The guidelines recommend:



***Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.*** While aiming for color and variety, try to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. They can be fresh, frozen, canned or dried.



***Switch to whole grains.*** Grains should take up one-quarter of your plate, but ensure half of those grains are whole grains (e.g., brown rice, oatmeal or whole-wheat bread).



***Vary your protein sources.*** This could mean swapping meat or poultry with seafood more often or using beans, peas and lentils in dishes.



***Opt for fat-free or low-fat dairy products.*** Milk, cheese and yogurt can help build and maintain strong bones, but focusing on nutritional substitutes for full-fat dairy products is essential.



***Limit foods and drinks higher in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium.*** A healthy diet doesn't have much room for those components, including alcoholic beverages.

# MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

MARCH 2024



## Recognizing the Symptoms of ADHD in Adults

New research by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration shows that prescriptions for drugs used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among women and patients ages 20-39. Researchers noted that the reasons for the increase are not obvious but could include pandemic-related stress, recognition of undiagnosed cases, over-prescription and online marketing of medications. Social media may have also enabled more people to recognize that they had untreated symptoms of ADHD and receive professional help.

ADHD is often thought of as a condition present during childhood, but it can impact adults, too; the condition manifests differently than in kids. Additionally, symptoms of ADHD can become more severe as the demands of adulthood increase. Inattention and distractibility are hallmark traits of ADHD, but adults specifically may experience the following symptoms:

- Inability to start or follow through on projects that require planning
- Difficulty with time management or organization
- Excessive daydreaming
- Interrupting others
- Inability to pay attention during conversation
- Difficulty managing finances or spending

Symptoms of ADHD can cause difficulty at work or home or with relationships. Also, keep in mind that these symptoms can vary. Just like other mental health conditions, ADHD is not permanent and can show up in different ways throughout one's lifecycle.

When left untreated, ADHD symptoms can be disruptive and potentially lead to depression, anxiety and substance misuse challenges. If you are experiencing symptoms of ADHD, it's imperative to receive a professional diagnosis, so reach out to a doctor to discuss symptoms and treatment.

- Inability to focus on one task for an extended period

## Food and Your Mood

As research reveals more about the mind-body connection, it becomes evident that food plays a pivotal role in influencing mood and overall mental well-being. A healthy, well-balanced diet can help individuals think clearly and be more alert. It can also improve concentration and attention span. The link between diet and emotions comes from the close relationship between the brain and the gastrointestinal tract, often called the "second brain."

The brain relies on a delicate balance of neurotransmitters, chemicals that transmit signals between nerve cells, to regulate mood and emotions. Certain nutrients from the foods you consume play a crucial role in the synthesis and function of these neurotransmitters.

## Eating Well for Mental Health

An American Psychiatric Association survey revealed that 4 in 5 adults would be willing to change their diet in a way that positively impacts mental health. Certain foods may improve overall brain health and certain types of mood disorders. Consider incorporating the following foods into your day-to-day diet:

- **Foods with omega-3 fatty acids** (e.g., salmon, flaxseeds,

chia seeds, walnuts and avocado)

- **Fermented foods** (e.g., kimchi, miso, tempeh, kombucha, kefir and yogurt)
- **Magnesium-rich foods** (e.g., cacao nibs, almonds, cashews, dark leafy greens and bananas)
- **Berries** (e.g., raspberries and blueberries)
- **Spices** (e.g., saffron, turmeric and ginger)

By making mindful choices and incorporating nutrient-rich foods into your diet, you can positively influence the delicate balance of neurotransmitters in your brain. While no single food can guarantee happiness, adopting a balanced and varied diet can contribute to an overall positive impact on your mood and mental and emotional health.

March is National Nutrition Month, making it a great time to assess your diet and ensure you're serving your body—and mind—well.

# Baked Fish and Vegetables

March 2024 Recipe

Makes: 4 servings



## Ingredients

4, 4-oz. frozen white fish fillets (cod or perch)  
2 cups frozen mixed vegetables  
1 small onion (diced)  
1 tsp. lemon juice  
1 Tbsp. fresh parsley flakes  
Aluminum foil (10-inch by 12-inch square)

### Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	145
Total fat	1 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	49 mg
Sodium	355 mg
Carbohydrate	15 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Total sugars	4 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	19 g

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450 F.
2. Separate and place fish fillets in center of each tin foil square.
3. Combine frozen vegetables and diced onion in bowl and mix. Spoon vegetables around fillets.
4. Sprinkle with lemon juice (or top with lemon slice) and add parsley on top. Fold ends of tin foil together to form a leak-proof seal.
5. Bake for 10 minutes. Serve.
6. Refrigerate leftovers.