

Five Reasons to Love Pasta!



Any type of pasta — fresh, frozen, filled or dried — can fit into a healthy diet. The Dietary Guidelines highlight three healthy eating patterns: U.S.-Style, Vegetarian and Mediterranean-Style. Whether white, whole wheat, whole grain, gluten-free, legume or bean-based, pasta pairs perfectly with the foods in these meal plans. Keep reading for more reasons to include pasta in your diet!

Reason 1: Pasta can help improve diet quality

Research shows adults and children who eat pasta have higher Healthy Eating Index scores and better quality diets than those who don't eat pasta, indicating that pasta eaters are more likely to meet U.S. Dietary Guidelines than non-pasta eaters.



Reason 2: Pasta eaters have better nutrient intakes

Pasta eaters have greater intake of key hard-to-get nutrients like folate, iron, magnesium, dietary fiber and vitamin E than non-pasta eaters. One reason for this could be that pasta is often paired with high fiber nutrient-dense vegetables, lean meats and beans.

Reason 3: Pasta provides energy

Pasta is a complex carbohydrate, so it is absorbed and digested more slowly than simple carbohydrates. Not only do carbohydrates provide excellent energy for physical activity and sports, but they are also the main source of energy for your brain. Although the brain represents only 2% of your body weight, it needs more than 20% of the body's daily energy to function.



Reason 4: Pasta does not cause weight gain

In appropriate amounts, pasta does not lead to weight gain and may even help you lose weight. In one study adult males showed no difference in BMI, waist circumference and body weight between pasta consumption, but adult female pasta eaters had reduced BMI, waist circumference and bodyweight compared to non-pasta eaters. According to the USDA, a ½ cup serving of cooked pasta like spaghetti contains less than 100 calories, less than a half gram of fat and less than 5 milligrams of sodium.

Reason 5: Pasta can help you increase vegetable intake

Pasta is the perfect vehicle to help increase vegetable intake. In fact, research shows eating pasta is associated with higher daily consumption of total vegetables, especially in the red group (think tomatoes), but other vegetables can also benefit. To increase intake, replace heavy sauces with vegetable-based versions or just a drizzle of olive oil, or swap out ½ to ¼ of the pasta in a recipe for the same amount of vegetable and beans.

