



2024 NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

DIETITIAN TOOLKIT



March 2024
National Pasta Association

Enjoy Pasta “Beyond the Table”

National Nutrition Month® 2024

Dear Dietitian,

This year’s National Nutrition Month® theme, “Beyond the Table,” provides opportunities to highlight pasta as nutritious, healthy, and delicious.

Here are three ways pasta is ideally suited for meals “Beyond the Table”.

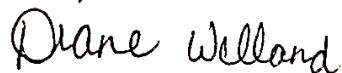
- **On the Go** - Pasta and noodles are perfect on the go and a favorite choice for [restaurant](#), [school](#) and foodservice menus.
- **Pasta Makes You Happy** - Pasta is comfort food, nourishing the soul, as well as the body. In fact, [emerging research](#) suggests eating pasta may even have a positive impact on our emotions.
- **Sustainable** - Budget-friendly, convenient, and [easy-to-prepare pasta meals](#) are ideally suited for eating throughout the week, reducing meal prep time and allowing you to use up leftovers and decrease food waste.

During National Nutrition Month, the [National Pasta Association](#) is committed to helping you share the many benefits of pasta, including its nutritional value and versatility with various nutritious foods.

Join us in sharing content throughout the month of March as it relates to nutrition guidance, healthy pasta meals, pasta research, and more.

For more information about pasta recipes, research or other resources please visit [sharethepasta.org](#) or feel free to email me at dwelland@kellencompany.com.

Sincerely,



Diane Welland MS, RD

“Beyond the Table” with Pasta

Pasta is not only delicious, but also provides many benefits that extend “Beyond the Table.” Pasta is nutritious, convenient, and energizing. Check out how pasta improves your diet.

Pasta Boosts Vegetable Intake

Pasta is the perfect vehicle for adding more vegetables to the diet as well as introducing more variety in the diet, by experimenting with different shapes and vegetables. In fact, a [study](#) found that pasta-eaters had a higher daily consumption of vegetables compared to non-pasta eaters. This research also saw increases specifically in the red and orange group. Pasta acts as blank palette for whatever flavor profile, spices, herbs or seasonings you choose.

Pasta Improves Diet Quality

According to [research](#) published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*, people who ate pasta had higher Healthy Eating Index scores (several points higher) than those adults and kids that didn’t eat pasta. This means that pasta-eating was associated with better quality diets overall and pasta eaters were more likely to meet US Dietary Guideline recommendations.

Pasta Should NOT be Associated with Obesity

A [recent literature](#) review of 38 studies evaluating pasta intake and body weight outcomes, found pasta intake is NOT associated with overweight or obesity in healthy children or adults. Not only that, but the study published in *Nutrients*, also suggests that pasta may actually be inversely associated with Body Mass Index (BMI) or abdominal obesity, particularly when consumed in the context of a healthy dietary pattern.

Pasta is Convenient

Pasta is quick and easy to make ahead of time. It is a great way to use other foods that have a shorter shelf life, such as fresh veggies and lean meat. Just pull out your [favorite pasta](#) from the pantry and combine with any vegetables in the drawer and leftover proteins in the fridge.

Pasta Provides Energy & Fuels the Brain

Pasta is a complex carbohydrate, so it is absorbed and digested more slowly than simple carbohydrates. Not only does it provide excellent energy for physical activities, but carbohydrates 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.

Pasta Tip Sheet

Nutrition

- Pasta is a fat-free, low sodium food.
- A two-ounce serving of pasta is equivalent to one cup of cooked pasta. One cup of cooked pasta contains just 200 calories, in addition to valuable fiber, vitamins and minerals.
- Pasta can be whole grain or it can be enriched. The USDA Dietary Guidelines recommend that up to half of your intake of total grains come from whole grains, which means the other half can be enriched grains.
- White pasta is fortified with three major B vitamins (niacin, thiamin and riboflavin), iron and the B vitamin folic acid, which is critical in the prevention of some birth defects. In fact, enriched pasta contains six times more folic acid than its whole grain counterpart.
- Pasta does not cause weight gain. A [recent literature](#) review of 38 studies evaluating pasta intake and body weight outcomes, found pasta intake is not associated with overweight or obesity in healthy children or adults. In addition, other [research](#) shows pasta consumption in adult females was associated with *reduced* waist circumference, body weight and body mass index (BMI).
- The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend consuming 45% to 65% of your total calories from carbohydrates.
- Complex carbohydrates are the main source of energy for the body and are released slowly and steadily through the day.

Sustainable

- Dry pasta can be stored for up to one year and does not need to be refrigerated, which also allows it to have a small carbon footprint and reduced food waste.
- Pasta is also ideal for repurposing leftovers like vegetables, beans and chicken, fish, beef or pork.
- Pasta water is a perfect way to add body and flavor to simple sauces. It can also stretch your dollar by extending rich sauces. Want more ways to use pasta water? Cooled, it can be used to water plants – it has nutrients to help your plants grow.

Consumption

- The United States consumes 5.95 billion pounds of pasta per year.
- The average American consumes approximately 20 lbs. of pasta annually making it the 6th highest food per capita in the country.

Sample Social Media Posts



Nutrition

- Pasta is a versatile food with benefits that extend beyond mealtimes. Pasta is a complex carbohydrate that breaks down slowly in the body, this means it provides a slow release of energy, keeping you energized all day. Learn more: <https://sharethepasta.org/pasta-nutrition/the-truth-about-carbs/>
- This just in – pasta does NOT cause weight gain. A recent study found eating pasta is not associated with weight gain. Read more: <https://sharethepasta.org/pasta-nutrition-news/new-npa-study-finds-pasta-eating-not-associated-with-weight-gain/>
- Carbs are not the enemy. In fact, your brain needs 130 grams a day of carbs to function properly. Plus, these nutrients produce serotonin, which helps to balance your emotions. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3aUi7BT> #NationalNutritionMonth #ShareThePasta

Convenience

- Did you know leftover pasta water can be combined with pasta sauce to add flavor and body to homemade or jarred sauce? #NationalNutritionMonth #ShareThePasta
- Pasta is the perfect way to boost vegetable intake. Try this Grilled Cauliflower Pasta with Lemon-Tahini Dressing featuring shell pasta. It's a hearty vegetable heavy meal that will keep you energized throughout the day: <https://sharethepasta.org/recipes/grilled-cauliflower-pasta-with-lemon-tahini-dressing/>
- A quick and convenient lunch is the answer during your busy week. Whether you enjoy your lunch in the carpool line, at work or anywhere in between, take pasta on the go with this Mason Jar Pasta Salad: <https://sharethepasta.org/recipes/mason-jar-pasta-salad/>

Social Posting Tips

- Use #NationalNutritionMonth and #ShareThePasta in posts throughout March.
- There are several "National Food Days" in March that can be tied with National Nutrition Month posts including:
 - March 9: National Meatball Day
 - March 11: National "Eat Your Noodles" Day
 - March 13: National Chicken Noodle Soup Day
 - March 20: National Ravioli Day
- Feel free to use any of the Share the Pasta's recipes.
- Tag @SharethePasta and NPA will re-share posts on Share the Pasta's channels.

Additional Resources

Fact Sheets and Infographics on Pasta

- [Everything you need to know about Pasta and Your Health](#)
- [Perfect Pasta Pairings](#)
- [Pasta: A Pantry Must-Have](#)
- [Five-Reasons-to-Love-Pasta-infographic.pdf \(sharethepasta.org\)](#)

Healthy, Convenient and Affordable Recipes

Soups:

- [Creamy Gnocchi and Mushroom Soup](#)
- [Chickpea and Cauliflower Pasta Soup with Turmeric](#)

Vegetarian:

- [Healthy Stuffed Shells](#)
- [Vegetarian Pho](#)

Pescetarian:

- [Pasta with Broccoli Pesto and Salmon](#)
- [15 Minute Lemon Pepper Pasta with Shrimp](#)

Nutritious:

- [Lunchbox Pesto Tortellini](#)
- [Chicken Pasta Power Bowls with Avocado Dressing](#)

Vegan:

- [Creamy Vegan Garlic & Herb Pasta](#)
- [Fusilli with Broccoli & Peanuts](#)
- [Creamy Vegan Garlic Herb Pasta](#)

[Recipe Images available here](#)

[All other recipes available on SharethePasta.org](#)

Research

- [New NPA Study Finds Pasta Eating Not Associated with Weight Gain](#)
- [Research Finds that People Who Eat Pasta Have Better Overall Diets](#)
- [New Study Shows Mediterranean Diet Preserves Cognitive Function](#)
- [Eating Pasta Associated with Higher Consumption of Vegetables](#)
- [New Study Shows Following the Mediterranean Diet Could Lead to Better Brain Health](#)

Download & Share

- National Nutrition Month Landing Page
- [Share the Pasta FAQ Page](#)
- [Why Eating Pasta is Good for You](#)
- [The Truth About Carbs](#)
- [Pasta and Your Weight](#)
- [Portion Sizes](#)

National Pasta Association is a [MyPlate Strategic Partner](#)

The National Pasta Association and Share the Pasta support pasta in a healthy diet through MyPlate. MyPlate helps consumers put the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) into practice. According to the 2020-2025 DGA pasta is part of the grains group. Grains are an essential part of the diet because they provide important vitamins, minerals, and complex carbohydrates. The amount of grains you need to eat depends on your age, sex, height, weight, and level of physical activity. For women, the amount can also depend on whether you are pregnant or breastfeeding. One half cup cooked pasta counts for 1 ounce of the grain group. Half of your grains should come from whole grains.