



Nutrivore

Beginner's Guide to Nutrivore

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Nutrivore is a flexible, no-guilt plan to get the nutrients you need while enjoying the foods you love.

Beginner's Guide to Nutrivore

Unlike traditional diets that focus on restriction, Nutrivore empowers you with nutrition knowledge to make small, meaningful changes to your current diet to fill nutrient gaps.

Why is Nutrivore important? The most generous estimates are that a mere 6% of people get enough essential nutrients from food alone. Some of the most common shortfalls include:

- **Vitamin E** – Supports immune function and skin health (found in nuts, seeds, and avocados).
- **Vitamin K** – Essential for blood clotting and bone health (found in leafy greens, broccoli, and fermented foods).
- **Vitamin D** – Essential for bone health and immune function (found in fatty fish, eggs, and fortified foods).
- **Magnesium** – Supports muscle function, sleep, and energy (found in nuts, seeds, and leafy greens).
- **Potassium** – Helps regulate blood pressure (found in potatoes, bananas, beans, and dairy).
- **Iron** – Supports energy and cognitive function (found in red meat, lentils, spinach, and mollusks such as clams).
- **Omega-3s** – Linked to heart and brain health (found in fish, shellfish, flaxseeds, and walnuts).
- **Fiber** – Supports digestion, gut health, and metabolic health (found in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains).

But why care about falling a little short of the daily value of essential nutrients? After all, we're not talking about severe nutrient deficiencies like scurvy or rickets.

Nutrient gaps can be invisible—you might not notice any symptoms at first, or only experience vague issues like fatigue, headaches, irritability, and aches and pains. But over time, these nutrient insufficiencies silently erode health, interacting with other risk factors like age, genetics, and social determinants of health, increasing the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, and cognitive decline.

This information is not meant to replace advice from your medical doctor or individual counseling with a registered dietitian. It is intended for educational and informational purposes only.

The goal of Nutrivore is to get all of the nutrients our bodies need from the foods we eat. It sounds simple, and once you know how, it is!

Filling nutrient gaps doesn't mean an overhaul of your whole diet. Instead focus on small, consistent changes that add up to make a big difference in long-term well-being. Three key eating patterns make it easy to be a Nutrivore:

- **Prioritizing whole and minimally processed foods** – Whole and minimally processed foods naturally retain more of their nutrients, making it easier to get the essential vitamins and minerals your body needs.
- **Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables** – Plant foods provide the majority of essential nutrients and fiber, so increasing your intake helps fill common nutrient gaps.
- **Emphasizing dietary diversity** – No single food contains everything you need, so consuming a wide variety of foods ensures you get a broad spectrum of nutrients.

Being a Nutrivore is about the overall quality of your whole diet, not a list of "yes" foods and "no" foods. It's not about rules or restrictions but about learning how to nourish your body in a way that works for you, while embracing quality-of-life foods as essential tools for consistency.

Whether they're favorite treats, cultural dishes, or convenience items—quality-of-life foods are important for making Nutrivore a sustainable, enjoyable way of eating. Research shows that up to 20% of daily calories from ultra-processed foods has no negative impact on health when the rest of the diet is mostly nutrient-dense whole foods. This balance allows for flexibility while still meeting nutrient needs.

- **Satisfaction and Sustainability:** Enjoying foods you love prevents feelings of deprivation, making it easier to maintain healthy habits long term.
- **Cultural and Social Connection:** Food is more than just fuel—it plays a role in traditions, celebrations, and shared experiences. Nutrivore encourages honoring these moments without guilt.
- **Real-Life Practicality:** Sometimes, convenience foods make life easier. Choosing nutrient-dense options most of the time allows space for packaged snacks, takeout meals, and indulgences without compromising overall health.

Instead of thinking in terms of "good" or "bad" foods, Nutrivore focuses on nutrient density first, while allowing flexibility for all foods to fit within a balanced diet.

A great way to incorporate Nutrivore principles is to include a wide variety of nutrient-dense foods throughout your week, making small, sustainable changes that feel enjoyable, including:

- **Vegetables** – Eating a mix of different vegetable families (like leafy greens, crucifers, root vegetables, and mushrooms) throughout the week supplies a broad range of nutrients. Start with what you enjoy and build from there!
- **Fruits** – All fruits provide essential nutrients. Berries, citrus, melons, apples, and tropical fruits all have unique benefits.

- **Legumes** – Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are great sources of fiber, plant protein, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- **Fish & Shellfish** – A nutrient powerhouse that provides omega-3s, protein, essential vitamins and essential minerals.
- **Nuts & Seeds** – Rich in heart healthy fats, fiber, and key vitamins and minerals.
- **Other Whole Foods** – Whole grains, dairy, eggs, poultry, and red meat can all be part of a nutrient-rich diet in amounts that work for you.

Nutrivore supports a balanced approach to eating—the more nutrient-dense foods we choose, the more flexibility we have for treats, cultural foods, and personal favorites. There are no "bad" foods on Nutrivore. Every food has a place, and no single meal determines the quality of your diet. Nutrivore is about making small, intentional choices that add nutrients rather than taking foods away.

Nutrivore is a dietary philosophy, not a diet. It's an approach that prioritizes nutrient-dense foods and can be applied to any eating style, whether structured (like vegetarian or Mediterranean) or flexible (like intuitive eating or an anti-diet approach). There are many ways to achieve Nutrivore, which means there's no food you have to avoid and no food you have to eat. Food choices can be adapted to your budget, dietary values, and personal food preferences, making Nutrivore a flexible and inclusive approach to healthy eating.

Ultimately, Nutrivore is about forming healthy habits and achieving *sustainable nutrition*—embracing food for enjoyment, traditions, and convenience while adding essential nutrients so you can achieve lifelong healthy eating patterns without the on-again-off-again diet rollercoaster.

Use the tips below as a flexible guide to easily make following a Nutrivore approach a healthy part of your everyday eating.

Tip #1 – Prioritize Whole & Minimally Processed Foods, Without Stress

- Nutrivore uses the loosest possible definition of whole food, recognizing that many ways of processing foods (like freezing and canning) only have a minimal impact on nutrient density. If you could make the food at home with relatively simple ingredients, it counts as a whole food (even if you buy the store-bought version)!
- Whole foods provide more nutrients per bite. These include fresh, frozen, dried, and canned vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, eggs, dairy, seafood, and meat.
- It's important to prepare whole foods in ways that taste good to you! Find recipes and ways to prepare whole foods so that you enjoy them. This is key to making healthier eating patterns sustainable.
- Ultra-processed foods can fit within Nutrivore! Getting up to 20% of our calories from ultra-processed foods is compatible with a healthy diet, whether you opt to leverage that 20% for treats, flavoring ingredients, budget-stretching foods, convenience foods, or comfort foods.

- If your diet includes a lot of ultra-processed foods now, you don't have to overhaul everything overnight—just start by adding more nutrient-dense foods alongside them.
- There's no need for perfection—just balance. Nutrivore isn't about avoiding foods but about adding more nutrient-rich options over time.

Tip #2 - Make Home-Cooked Meals Work for You

- Preparing meals at home gives you the opportunity to add more nutrient-dense foods to your plate, but Nutrivore can work with any eating style—including restaurant meals and convenience options.
- If cooking from scratch feels overwhelming, start small. Try semi-homemade meals like adding fresh toppings to frozen pizza or pairing a store-bought rotisserie chicken with a simple salad.
- Convenience foods can align with Nutrivore. Pre-chopped veggies, canned soups, frozen meals, or restaurant takeout can be a part of a balanced nutrient-dense diet.
- It's okay to have meals that are just for enjoyment. If most of your meals align with Nutrivore, there's room for flexibility.

Tip #3 - Cover Half Your Plate with a Variety of Vegetables & Fruit

- Aim for 5 or more servings of vegetables daily. A serving of most vegetables is 1 cup measured raw and chopped, or about the same size as your fist; a serving of leafy greens is 2 cups measure raw and loosely packed, or about two fists. Most vegetables shrink to about half a cup when cooked. It's okay to work up to this slowly over time.
- Aim for 2 to 3 servings of fruit daily. It's okay to eat more! A serving is 1 cup measured raw (chopped for something large like melon, whole for something smaller like berries) or a medium size fruit about the size of your fist. Frozen and unsweetened canned options are excellent choices. For dried fruit, ¼ to ½ cup counts as a serving.
- Mix up raw and cooked produce. Both provide unique benefits, so variety is key.
- Eat the rainbow! Choose fruits and vegetables from all five color families: red, orange/yellow, green, blue/purple, and white/brown.
- Frozen and canned vegetables are great options! They're affordable, convenient, and retain most of their nutrients. Look for low-sodium options for vegetables, and fruit canned in juice instead of syrup.

Tip #4 - Cover One Quarter of Your Plate in a Starchy Food

- Starchy plant foods include root vegetables (sweet potatoes, potatoes), starchy fruits (plantains), winter squash, legumes, and grains.
- A serving is as one cup raw for starchy vegetables and fruit like plantains, or one ounce raw for pulse legumes and whole grains, all of which translate to about half a cup cooked.
- Pulse legumes are the most nutrient-dense starchy foods on average. Aim for 4 or more servings of legumes per week. Canned and packaged beans are great options.
- Whole grains offer more nutrients than refined grains. Choose them when possible, but all grains can fit within Nutrivore.

- There are some stand-out root vegetables like sweet potatoes and butternut squash. If you opt for a root vegetables as your starchy food, that means $\frac{3}{4}$ of your plate is filled with fruits and vegetables!

Tip #5 - Cover One Quarter of Your Plate in a Protein Food

- Seafood and organ meat are the most nutrient-dense protein choices.
- Protein foods include fish, shellfish, organ meat, poultry, red meat, broth, eggs, dairy, and plant proteins like legumes and soy products.
- Serving sizes vary:
 - **Meat:** 3.5 oz (~palm-sized)
 - **Eggs:** 2 large eggs
 - **Seafood:** 4 oz (~palm-sized)
 - **Cheese:** 1.5 oz
 - **Milk/Yogurt:** 1 cup
 - **Broth:** 1 cup
 - **Legumes:** 1/2 cup
 - **Tofu:** 1/4 cup
- Aim for 3+ servings of fish and shellfish per week. Frozen and canned options are great.
- When you select a whole-food plant protein, for example the classic combination of rice and beans (together, a complete protein), merge the quarter of your plate filled with protein foods with the quarter of your plate filled with starchy foods. Processed plant proteins like tofu, tempeh, seitan, plant-based meats and protein powders count only towards the protein quarter and not toward the starch quarter of your plate.

Tip #6 - Choose Healthy Fats

- Opt for heart healthy fats like olive oil, avocado oil and vegetable oils most of the time for cooking and salad dressings.
- Foods naturally rich in healthy fats include fish, shellfish, avocados, olives, nuts, and seeds.
- Aim for 4 to 7 servings of nuts and seeds per week. A serving is 1 oz (~a level cupped palmful).
- It's okay to include other fats like butter for flavor. Nutrivore is about balance.

Tip #7 - Eat More Phytonutrient-Rich Foods

- Herbs and spices are among the most concentrated sources of phytonutrients—use them liberally to season and garnish food!
- Tea (green, black, white, herbal), coffee, cocoa, and dark chocolate all provide beneficial phytonutrients.
- Fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains also provide phytonutrients.

Tip #8 - Eat Some Fermented Foods

- Examples include sauerkraut, pickles, kimchi, vinegar, kefir, kombucha, and yogurt.
- Even small amounts (as little as a teaspoon) provide benefits!

Tip #9 - Drink Plenty of Fluids

- Aim for ~13 cups (101 ounces, or 3 liters) of fluid per day for men and ~9 cups (74 ounces, or 2.2 liters) of fluid per day for women daily. This includes all beverages (yes, even tea and coffee), as well as the water content of the food we eat. We get about 20% of our daily water from food, particularly fruits, vegetables, and soups!
- Water is the best choice for hydration. This includes plain water, sparkling water, club soda, spring or mineral water, and infused or flavored waters without added sugar. It's best to avoid alkaline water.
- Tea and coffee have health benefits when consumed in moderation (up to three cups per day for coffee or up to six cups per day for tea).
- Juice can be beneficial in modest amounts, up to ~5 ounces (150 ml) of fruit juice per day.
- Dairy, including milk, supports heart health. Studies show that dairy consumption is linked to a reduced risk of stroke, coronary heart disease, and high blood pressure.
- Fermented beverages like kombucha, kefir, and kvass provide probiotics and postbiotics.
- Sugar-sweetened drinks (like soda, sports drinks, and energy drinks) are best consumed in moderation. Keeping added sugar intake below 10% of total calories helps maintain overall health.

Tip #10 - Choose as Much Variety as Possible

- Eating a diverse diet improves health. Try to include a wide range of foods throughout the week, and mix it up week to week and season to season.
- Aim for 35+ different foods per week. Count any whole or minimally-processed food that you eat cumulatively half a serving of or more throughout the week. It's okay if you work up to this goal slowly over time.
- Different varieties of produce count! (e.g., romaine lettuce and red leaf lettuce, Fuji apples and gala apples, purple carrots and orange carrots, each of these count.)
- Eat the rainbow—include options from each of the five color families daily or near daily: red, orange and yellow, green, blue and purple, and white and brown.
- Eating seasonally and locally can be a great way to add variety, save money, and maximize nutrient intake.

Tip #11 - Moderate Certain Foods

- Salt – Keep sodium intake between 2.3 and 5 grams daily (about 1 to 2 teaspoons of salt per day) unless your doctor has recommended a different amount. If you mainly cook at home, you typically don't need to worry about salt intake.

- **Alcohol** – There's no amount of alcohol consumption that improves health. Moderate consumption is no more than 4 drinks per day for males and 3 drinks per day for females AND a maximum of 14 drinks per week for males and 7 drinks per week for females.
- **Sugar** – Added sugars should ideally be 10% or less of total calories. It's okay to have occasional days where intake is higher. Added sugar does not include the sugar naturally found in whole foods like fruit. When considering total dietary sugars, aim for ≤25% of total calories.
- **Caffeine** – Be mindful of caffeine intake to ensure it doesn't disrupt sleep. It may help to limit caffeinated beverages to the morning.

Tip #12 - Start Your Day with a Nutrient-Packed Meal

- Eating breakfast helps set a strong foundation for the day in addition to regulating important hormones and circadian rhythm. A nutrient-dense breakfast provides steady energy, supports cognitive function, and makes it easier to meet nutrient needs.
- A balanced breakfast includes protein, healthy fats, fiber, and whole-food carbs—like eggs with veggies, oatmeal with nuts and fruit, or yogurt with seeds and berries.
- Not hungry in the morning? That's okay! Focus on your first meal of the day being balanced and nutrient-rich, whether it's at 7 AM or 11 AM. Working on healthy lifestyle will also help regulate morning appetite.

Tip #13 - Healthy lifestyle is also important.

- Aim for 8 or more hours of sleep every single night on a consistent schedule.
- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderately-vigorous activity throughout the week. Going on five 30-minute walks per week is a great way to achieve this.
- Include some strength-training exercise in your routine at least twice a week, such as weightlifting, yoga, calisthenics, hill climbing, swimming, heavy gardening, tai chi, cycling, walking up stairs, dance, hiking. Even a 1-minute movement break for squats or push-ups counts!
- Improve your resilience to stress by getting enough sleep, living an active lifestyle, spending some time in nature, fostering healthy relationships, taking social media or technology breaks, and practicing mindful meditation.

Tip #14 - Progress > Perfection.

- There's a very small difference in nutrient density between organic versus non-organic produce, grass-fed versus conventional meat, wild-caught versus farmed seafood, etc. Studies also show that the conventional versions of these foods are safe and healthy to consume. So, it's okay to buy the most affordable options.
- It's okay to work up to the serving targets outlined above, and gradually improve the nutritional quality of your diet over time.
- There are no "bad foods" on Nutrivore. Not every food you eat needs to be the pinnacle of nutrient density—your diet can meet your nutritional needs while including some low

nutrient-density, quality-of-life foods. So, you don't need to feel guilty about eating a food that isn't particularly nutritious.

- There is no one perfect Nutrivore diet—there is a ton of flexibility of food choice that aligns with Nutrivore principles.
- Nutrivore celebrates every small step you take towards consuming a more nutrient-replete diet.

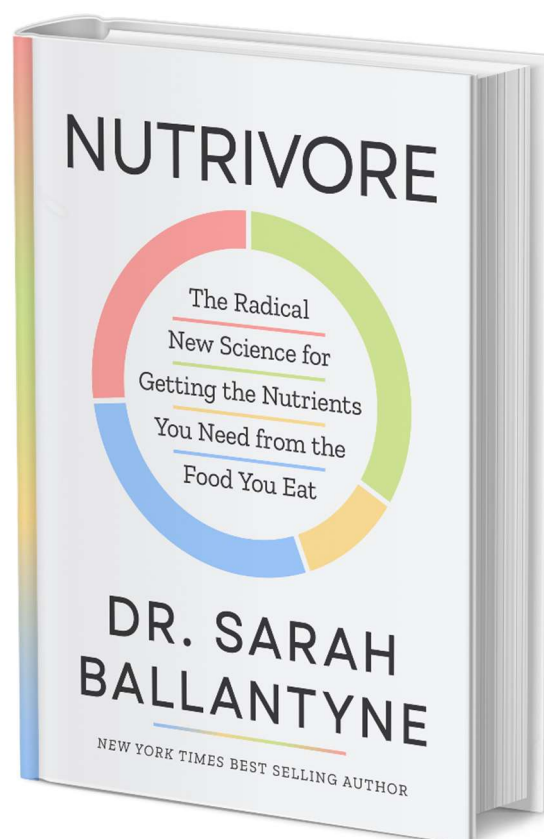
Troubleshooting: If You're Struggling With...

- **Short on time?** Use pre-chopped veggies, frozen produce, or batch cook meals ahead of time.
- **Picky eating?** Start with familiar flavors and slowly introduce new foods in small amounts.
- **Low budget?** Focus on affordable nutrient-dense staples like beans, eggs, frozen veggies, and canned fish.
- **Feeling overwhelmed?** Pick just **one small change** at a time to build consistency and get that first win! Try one of these easy steps this week:
 - Add an extra serving of veggies to one meal.
 - Swap one snack for a nutrient-packed option like nuts, yogurt, or fruit.
 - Experiment with a new food or recipe to boost variety.
 - Hydrate with an extra glass of water or herbal tea.

Everything You Need in One Place!

Nutrivore cuts through diet culture noise with clear, evidence-based guidance so you can alleviate common symptoms and reduce your risk of health problems like diabetes and heart disease. **Dr. Ballantyne has included everything you need to achieve sustainable nutrition**—lifelong healthy eating patterns without the on-again-off-again diet rollercoaster—including:

- **A permissive approach to achieving optimal nutrition**, highlighting 12 foundational food families while embracing food for enjoyment, traditions, and convenience.
- **Accessible science and handy lists to identify foods** that fit within your preferred diet or anti-diet and that are rich in the nutrients that treat common symptoms and ailments.
- **Debunking common nutrition myths** so you can finally live free from food fear and stop wasting time, energy, and money on the latest fad diets or biohacking trends.
- **Practical guides and recipes to craft personalized eating plans** that meet your body's nutritional needs, fit your budget and preferences, and help you reach your health goals.



Nutrivore is a gentle and inclusive approach that celebrates slow, sustainable habit changes, making it a long-lasting way to eat for vibrant health today and lifelong wellness.

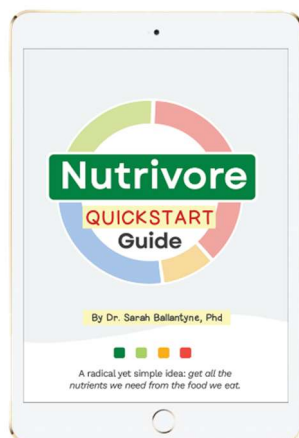
“*Nutrivore* offers a friendly and actionable approach to healthy eating without restriction, food fear, or judgment!

—**Melissa Urban**, Whole30 co-founder and
#1 *New York Times* bestselling author.

Available wherever books are sold.

Digital Resources to Get More Out of Nutrivore

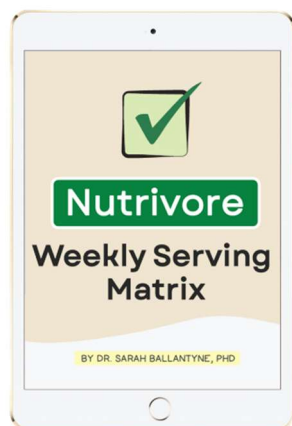
➡ <https://nutrivore.com/shop>



The *Nutrivore Quickstart Guide* e-book explains why and how to eat a Nutrivore diet, introduces the Nutrivore Score, gives a comprehensive tour of the full range of essential and important nutrients, and includes detailed nutrition information for the Top 100 Nutrivore Score Foods, summarized with beautiful easy-to-read graphics. And, the *Nutrivore Quickstart Guide* includes analysis of food groups, considerations when preparing Nutrivore meals, practical tips to increase the nutrient density of your diet, and look-up tables for the Nutrivore Score of over 700 foods.



The *Top 25 Foods for Every Nutrient* e-book is a well-organized, easy-to-use, grocery store-friendly guide to help you choose common foods that fit your needs of 43 important nutrients while creating a balanced nutrient-dense diet. You'll learn about each nutrient, plus get two "Top 25" food lists for each nutrient, the foods with the most per serving, and the most-nutrient dense foods that are also good sources. Plus, you'll find RDA charts for everyone, informative visuals, fun facts, serving sizes and the 58 foods that are Nutrient Super Stars!



The *Nutrivore Weekly Serving Matrix* digital resource makes it super easy to put this food philosophy into practice, regardless of which dietary template you follow! The Nutrivore Weekly Serving Matrix is an easy-to-use and flexible weekly checklist designed to help you maximize nutrient-density, without having to use a food tracking app or analyzing micronutrients, and while eating the right amounts of all those superfoods known to improve health outcomes! This resource includes an instructional guide and downloadable interactive guides.