

Packaged Food Makeover

Love the convenience of packaged foods?
Follow these tips for making them healthier.

INSTANT NOODLES

- Look for brands that bake the noodles instead of frying them.
- Stir in fresh or frozen vegetables. Try broccoli, peas, carrots, edamame (soy beans), or spinach.
- Add protein if you like. Try leftover cooked chicken, fish or beef. Or add cubes of tofu.
- Use only half of the seasoning packet.

“JUST ADD MEAT” BOXED MEALS

- Use lean ground beef, chicken or turkey. Drain fat from cooked meat.
- Add whatever veggies you have on hand, the more the better! Try broccoli, carrots, peas, spinach, cauliflower, peppers, onions.

BOXED MACARONI & CHEESE

- Add fresh or frozen broccoli or spinach to the pasta during the last few minutes of cooking.
- For southwestern flair, add salsa and cooked black beans for the last 2-3 minutes of cooking.

CANNED SOUP

- Choose options with less than 480 mg sodium per cup serving.
- Mix in plenty of extra fresh, frozen, or canned veggies (or beans for extra protein).

FROZEN & TAKE OUT PIZZA

- Buy a plain cheese pizza or ask for half the cheese. Add your own toppings.
- Top with your favorite cooked veggies. Try broccoli, peppers, onions, olives, tomatoes, zucchini, and spinach. (Wilt fresh spinach by putting it in the microwave with a few drops of water. Squeeze out water after cooking.)
- If you want meat, add low-fat turkey pepperoni. Or use cooked chicken or turkey sausage.
- Look for whole grain crust if you can find them. If not, look for thin crusts.

FROZEN OR PREPACKED CHINESE FOOD

- If veggies aren't included, stir them in! Try bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower and edamame.

TACO DINNER KITS

- Look for kits with whole wheat or corn tortillas.
- Use lean ground beef, chicken or turkey.
- Cook half the amount of ground meat called for in the recipe. Drain fat. Stir in a can of rinsed and drained black beans or pinto beans. Or use all beans.
- Add cooked veggies like chopped tomatoes or shredded zucchini.
- Top with low-fat cheese or sour cream.

CANNED RAVIOLI OR PASTA DISHES

- Look for products made with whole grain pasta.
- Add your favorite cooked veggies.
- Try zucchini, yellow squash or spinach. Or serve with a veggie-filled side salad.

FROZEN CHICKEN NUGGETS OR FISH STICKS

- Compare labels. Choose a brand with less saturated fat and sodium.
- Look for chicken nuggets made with white meat instead of dark.
- Serve with a hearty salad or colorful vegetable side dish.
- If fries on the side are a must, make your own sweet potato fries.

FROZEN WAFFLES OR PANCAKES

- Look for whole grain pancakes or waffles.
- Top with fresh fruit and yogurt instead of syrup.
- If making pancakes, add bananas and berries to the batter. You can also add canned pumpkin.

