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**Energize
your diet**
Spring is the perfect time to eat a little cleaner and greener. And we have just the plan to motivate you and make getting a fresh start easy.

By MARNIE SOMAN SCHWARTZ

Maybe you want to brighten your mood or feel less fatigued. Or you're looking to lighten up your diet after the winter. Whatever your goal, we've got a simple solution. "A one-week reboot plan filled with delicious, healthy foods is just what you need to get motivated to eat well long-term," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, R.D.N., a *Shape* advisory board member and author of *The Superfood Swap*. This means eliminating any foods that are weighing you down and loading up on those that benefit your body and brain.

"Trading in refined sugars and flours, and other processed stuff you may be occasionally sneaking in, for whole foods that are nutrient-dense and full

of flavor will make you immediately feel healthier," says Blatner. That's because simple carbs, plentiful in the foods you'll be cutting out, are associated with fatigue, reports research in the *Nevada Journal of Public Health*.

Your mood will get a boost too. Eating more fruits and vegetables makes you happier and more confident, research shows. These foods have nutrients that keep neurotransmitters functioning optimally, says study author Tamlin S. Conner, Ph.D.

And because you see the benefits of a jump-start right away, "it'll help to cement good habits," say Willow Jarosh, R.D.N., and Stephanie Clarke, R.D.N., of C&J Nutrition. →

The ground rules

Begin your jump-start week by ditching the foods that make you hungry and tired. That means processed carbs—even whole-grain breads, pastas, and crackers. Doing this will keep your blood-sugar fluctuations minimal so you don't get hungry and give up, Clarke and Jarosh say.

Also, steer clear of all forms of added sugar, including maple syrup, honey, and agave. We know, but stay strong—it's worth it: One study found that when people cut their added sugar from 28 percent of calories to 10 percent, their blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and blood-sugar levels improved in as little as nine days.

And last, memorize this mantra: Table. Plate. Chair. Instead of scarfing lunch from a takeout container at your desk or dinner on the couch in front of the TV, sit in a chair at the table, eat your food from a real plate, and chew slowly and relish each bite. Do this for a week, and you'll find you will enjoy meals more and naturally eat less when you savor the flavor and experience, Blatner says. That new awareness can also help control your cravings: In a study, people who received instructions on how to eat mindfully ate fewer sweets than those who didn't, for up to a full year. Plus, they were less likely to regain any weight they lost during the study.



What to put on your menu

Now comes the good part—all the food you get to enjoy. You can still have your favorites, Blatner says, just eat healthier versions of them. For example, instead of tacos, make a salad of lentils cooked with taco seasonings, vegetables, and guac. In general, fill your plate with food that's full of flavor, texture, and color, Clarke and Jarosh say. Here's what to stock up on.

The full rainbow

Aim for three cups or more of veggies a day, and eat at least one type at every meal, including breakfast, Blatner says. Add sliced tomatoes to your avocado toast, throw some

shredded greens in your eggs, or make a green smoothie.

And while all vegetables are good for you, cruciferous ones (broccoli, cauliflower, kale) and dark, leafy greens (arugula, mustard greens, watercress) are especially powerful because they help keep your cells healthy, say Clarke and Jarosh.

Clean protein

Eat more plant protein during your jump-start, since

this type of food has impactful health benefits. Legumes are high in filling fiber; tofu is rich in calcium. When you do go for animal protein, opt for grass-fed beef, pasture-raised pork, and organic chicken, which may be leaner and healthier.

Real grains

Consume three to five servings of 100-percent whole grains like brown rice, oats, millet, and quinoa each day. Because they have no additives, whole grains are supernutritious. They're also chewy and full of water, so they keep you satisfied, research shows.

Loads of spices

They deliver concentrated doses of antioxidants and add great flavor for zero calories. Plus, cinnamon and ginger bring out the natural sweetness in foods like fruit, plain yogurt, and even roasted vegetables, say Clarke and Jarosh.

A few fruits

Have one to two pieces or cups of fruit a day, focusing on berries, citrus, and apples. Berries are especially high in antioxidants, and citrus is packed with flavonoids that keep your liver healthy, Clarke and Jarosh say. Apples have a type of fiber that nourishes the healthy bacteria

in your gut, which help regulate everything from your digestion to your mood.

Nuts and seeds

Packed with healthy fats, they help you feel fuller longer, and their crunchiness makes you eat more slowly. In addition to walnuts and almonds, try dried watermelon seeds, which are full of energy-boosting iron, as a salad topping. Add water-absorbing chia seeds to oats and smoothies to stay hydrated and satisfied.

Something fermented

Sauerkraut, kimchi, and other fermented veggies add kick to your meals and deliver probiotics to keep your gut bugs in balance. Add a spoonful to sandwiches, eggs, or salad. ★



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