



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Nutrient Density for People with Down Syndrome

Nutrient dense foods have a lot of vitamins and minerals without a lot of calories. It is especially important for people with Down syndrome to eat nutrient dense foods. Read this handout to learn how nutrient dense foods help you live a happy, healthy life.

WHAT IS NUTRIENT DENSITY?

Nutrient dense foods are good “bang for your buck.” They have a lot of:

- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Fiber

WHY IS NUTRIENT DENSITY IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME?

- Studies show that individuals with Down syndrome use 10 to 15 % less energy when at rest than peers of the same size, age and gender.
- People with Down syndrome need the same nutrients, but they have fewer calories to spend if they want to keep the same weight.
- Nutrient density is especially important for those trying to lose weight or people with hypothyroidism.

HOW DO I CHOOSE NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS?

- **Emphasize Quality** – Choose more nutrient dense varieties of products when available.
- **Encourage Diversity** – Eat foods from at least 3 food groups at meals, and 2 at snacks.
- **Implement Gradually** – Ease the household into healthier options, one or two at a time.
- **Be Strategic** – Separate the changes someone will and will not make.
- **Foster Creativity** – Make healthy options fun and exciting.



WHAT ARE NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS?

- Brightly colored fruits and vegetables
- Whole-grain, fortified and fiber-rich grains
- Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt
- Lean meats, poultry and fish
- Eggs
- Beans
- Nuts

HOW CAN I MAKE NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS FUN?

- **Rock Star Foods** – Give pictures of Rock Star Foods (nutrient dense foods) and let them create a chart showing which ones members of the family like best.
- **Meal Makeover** – Challenge people to add more nutrient-dense foods to a meal.
- **Mapping Out MyPlate** – Determine how well-balanced your diet is by checking off the number of servings you had from each food group during the day.