

## Healthy Food Choices at a Convenience Store

### Step 1: Look for fresh food items

Fresh foods have vitamins and minerals that give you good health and energy. They are naturally low in fat, salt, and sugar. A diet rich in fresh foods helps our bodies fight off illness and disease while supporting a healthy lifestyle.

Fresh food items include:

- fresh fruits (commonly found by the cash register or in baskets located around the store)
- fresh vegetables (found inside other packaged items like grab-and-go boxes)
- milk, gallon and individual size (found in the refrigerated drink section—be sure to select fat-free or low-fat)

### Step 2: Look for canned food items (fruits, vegetables, protein)

Eating canned fruits and vegetables is another way to eat healthy if you can't find fresh food. These fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh ones. However, canned items may have a lot of salt or sugar. Draining and rinsing these items can help lower the salt and sugar.

You can also find canned protein foods. When buying canned protein, choose the ones that are low in fat, like chicken or tuna. Try to choose the ones that say “canned in water” or “canned in olive oil.” These items can normally be found in the aisle furthest away from the entrance.

Items include:

- canned vegetables
- canned fruits
- fruit cups
- canned tuna
- canned chicken breast

### Step 3: Grab-and-Go

Many stores have a refrigerated section of ready-to-eat, nutritious food items including fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat protein items, and other nutritious snack and meal options.

These types of foods keep the body feeling full for a longer period of time because they are higher in protein and fiber content. The calories from these foods provide great nutrients to stay focused and energized throughout the day while improving overall health and diet.

Grab-and-Go foods are usually located at the front or sides of the store nearest the entrance or in refrigerators closer to the back.

Items include:

- fresh fruit cups
- protein/bistro boxes
- Greek yogurt

- string cheese
- 100% fruit and vegetable juices
- hard-boiled eggs
- variety snack packs
- pre-made sandwiches
- salads
- hummus and pretzels

#### **Step 4: If all else fails, choose a healthy packaged snack**

Packaged foods are usually highly processed and lower in nutritional value, so they are our last choice when shopping for healthy foods at a convenience store. These types of food items contain high amount of trans fat, salt, sugar, oils, chemical additives, and calories. Packaged foods are often referred to as “empty calories” because they are lower in nutrients and high in calories.

Look for packaged foods that contain whole grain items like popcorn or crackers. Also look for ingredients like seeds, nuts, and dried fruits. Be sure to look at the serving size printed on the back to avoid overeating.

These items are usually found along with other packaged food items, but don't tend to have as much shelf space. They are mostly in the back corner of the store, or on the last aisle furthest away from the cash register.

Items include:

- trail mix
- mixed nuts
- dried fruit
- veggie chips
- peanut butter crackers
- beef jerky
- granola bars
- protein bars