

[IMAGE]

Spring Into Action: Clean Out the Pantry

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Most of us think of our closets when we talk about spring cleaning. But what about our pantry and fridge? Because our diet can drastically change from winter time into the warmer months, cleaning out our pantry and fridge during springtime is a good habit to pick up.

The key things to think about for a fridge and pantry clean up are your health goals. Is your blood sugar or cholesterol too high? Do you have food sensitivities or allergies that require abstinence from certain foods? Do you have a few pounds you'd like to lose?

Once you've established your health goals, then it's a good time to start looking through your cupboards and refrigerator. There are general categories of foods that you should throw out and there are typical foods that you should make sure you keep well-stocked in your fridge and pantry. Let's start with what to throw out.

These are the typical categories of foods to toss out:

1. Frozen pre-made desserts like ice cream, popsicles, and cakes
2. Processed, pre-packaged foods
3. Sugar or sugar substitutes
4. Diet or regular soda
5. Cookies and chips
6. Pre-made processed sauces or dressings

spring cleaning - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Basically, I want you to throw out the processed foods in your fridge and pantry...even the ones labeled 'low calorie' or '100 calorie' type packs or snacks.

In general, processed foods worsen cholesterol, sugars and weight. They also are typically chock full of typical food sensitivities or allergens. So, even if you're not sure what you are sensitive to, these processed foods won't be making your weight, health, or intestinal tract very happy.

The typical things you should keep in your fridge and pantry are:

1. A variety of rainbow-colored vegetables (frozen is fine and potentially more cost-effective as long as they are not frozen with sauces already drenched on them)
2. Organic white meat of chicken or turkey
3. Wild fish
4. Raw nuts
5. Sparkling or still water (you can keep fresh lemon or lime around to add natural flavors to water)
6. Organic teas
7. If you must have red meat, such as if you are iron deficient, you should aim for bison meat over beef since it is lower in saturated fats
8. Legumes
9. Quinoa or faro
10. Crudité and hummus dips
11. Balsalmic vinegar and olive oil with spices to make your own dressings
12. Fresh popcorn made yourself (no prepackaged popcorn)
13. If you must have something sweet, you can make fresh juices from fruits and freeze them for popsicles
14. Agave nectar and stevia are better sweet substitutes

These are just some ideas to get you started. But if you'll notice, the key difference is that I want real foods made by Mother Nature in your fridge and pantry. Many of these foods are easy to grab and eat just as they are without a lot of prep time. So, throw out those pre-packaged processed foods and put in your life these wholesome foods that Mother Nature meant for you to eat...if you do, you'll be seeing a healthier, slimmer you by the summer!

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