

## Simple Choices Can Boost Nutrition in 2004

By Dr. Sanjay Gupta

Instead of making a New Year's resolution for a diet overhaul, how about making some simple eating choices that improve health in the long run?

Here are some picks that can be easily working into diets. Most people probably haven't even thought about these foods as being super healthy/

**Whole Wheat Products** – Many try to cut down on the intake of carbohydrates, staying away from pasta and refined sugars. But the next time you're at the supermarket, eliminate pasta from that guilty-pleasure list by choosing whole wheat pasta, which is high in fiber.

Choosing whole wheat pasta contributes to a lowered risk of heart disease, reduced complications linked to diabetes, a lower likelihood of having cancer and better gastrointestinal health because of more fiber.

For snacking, pick out a whole wheat pretzel or whole wheat tortillas instead of white. Other good choices? Having a bowl of oatmeal for breakfast or trying whole grain crackers such as Triscuits instead of regular saltier, buttery choices.

**Salmon and Beans** – Another favorite food of 2004 has to be salmon. It contains Omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce the risk of heart attacks and help lower blood cholesterol. Its vitamin A and carotenoids may also prevent cancer. There's much less saturated fat in salmon than in equal amounts of just about any meat or poultry protein source.

Beans and other legumes such as lentils and peas are inexpensive to buy, but they are rich in protein, iron and folic acid and fiber. Unlike other vegetables, they can step in for meat, poultry, eggs or other protein foods, cutting down on the risk of heart disease and cancers that some of those meats might have.

Another winning choice is a cup of chili, containing only about two grams of saturated fat. Choosing bean dip or hummus over cheese or cream based dips can also be a healthy alternative. How about throwing some garbanzo beans into a salad?

**Sweet Potatoes** – The sweet potato has been ranked continuously as the most nutritious vegetable source around. They are loaded with four times the recommended daily allowance of beta carotene, which is critical for healthy vision, bone growth, tooth development and good skin and hair.

And for Atkins dieters who are cutting down on sugars and carbs, sweet potatoes are on the save list as a great substitute for other starches such as rice, potatoes and corn.

So instead of vaguely resolving to eat healthy, take some simple, but specific steps such as learning to recognize good fat over bad fat and good carbs over bad carbs. Pay attention to the calories butr also know which foods stand out for their high nutritional content.

*Reprinted from an article posted on CNN.com on January 5, 2004*