



## The Nutrient Rich Foods Approach

### What is the Nutrient Rich Foods (NRF) Approach?

- The NRF approach is a positive, total diet approach that considers the complete nutrient package of foods and beverages as a way to help people build healthier diets. Because it focuses on a food's complete nutrient package, it shifts the focus from foods to avoid to foods to enjoy.
- All foods can fit into a nutrient-rich eating plan, but of course, balance is required. The core focus of the NRF approach is that people can achieve a healthier diet by choosing nutrient-rich foods first from the five basic food groups.
- Consumer research conducted by the NRF Coalition revealed that people understand and embrace the concept of nutrient richness. They view it as a positive and balanced approach to eating, common-sense guidance they can personalize for their family with the right tips and tools, and an easy way to teach kids about healthy eating.<sup>1</sup>
- The NRF Coalition also conducted research to test how educating people about the NRF approach and consumer education tools could change their knowledge, attitudes and behavior related to meal planning, food shopping, and eating nutrient-rich foods, and affect overall diet quality.<sup>2</sup> Top-line results indicate that the NRF approach empowered people to take small steps to improve their overall diet quality, including helping them to choose nutrient-rich foods, and increase meal planning and shopping with a list.

### How Can Someone Follow the NRF Approach?

- Following the NRF approach means choosing nutrient-rich foods first within each of the five basic food groups and selecting less nutrient-rich options as calorie recommendations allow. The NRF approach is not a specific eating plan, but it helps people pick nutrient-rich foods that best fit personal tastes and lifestyles, giving them a long-term, well-balanced and healthier way to eat.
- To eat the nutrient-rich way, people are encouraged to choose foods based on their total nutrient package, including vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber, instead of choosing foods based solely on what they don't contain, such as saturated fat, added sugars and sodium.

### Why focus on nutrient-rich foods?

- The NRF approach is based on a long-standing principle in nutrition guidance, nutrient density. Nutrient-dense (or nutrient-rich) foods and beverages are those that provide a substantial amount of vitamins and minerals for relatively few calories.<sup>3</sup>
- Nutrition experts agree that most Americans are overweight<sup>4,5</sup> and undernourished,<sup>6,7</sup> missing out on important nutrients because they are not choosing nutrient-rich foods first. In order to improve public health, Americans need to do more than just count calories; they need to make each calorie count more.

## Enjoy these nutrient-rich foods as the foundation of a healthy diet:

- Whole, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods
- Vibrantly colored vegetables and potatoes
- Brightly colored fruits and 100 percent fruit juice
- Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt
- Lean meats, skinless poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

Visit [www.NutrientRichFoods.org](http://www.NutrientRichFoods.org) for more information, including a food groups weekly checklist, nutrient-rich shopping list, and nutrient-rich recipes and meal ideas to help build a healthier diet.



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<sup>1</sup> IA Collaborative. *NRFC Functional Requirement Focus Groups*, 2008. Copyright Nutrient Rich Foods Coalition, Oakbrook Terrace, IL, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> RTI International. *Nutrition Advice Study*, 2009. Copyright Nutrient Rich Foods Coalition, Oakbrook Terrace, IL, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2005. 6th Edition, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Flegal K, Carroll M, Ogden C., Curtin L. Prevalence and Trends in Obesity Among US Adults, 1999-2008. *JAMA*. 2010;303(3):235-241.

<sup>5</sup> Ogden C, Carroll M, Curtin L, Lamb M, Flegal K. Prevalence of High Body Mass Index in US Children and Adolescents, 2007-2008. *J Am Med Assoc* 2010;303(3):242-249.

<sup>6</sup> *What We Eat In America*, NHANES 2005-2006.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2005. 6th Edition, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2005.