

OCTOBER 2011

## World on Your Plate:

# Mouth-watering Middle Eastern Menu



By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

From Beirut to Haifa, Middle Eastern fare is rich in flavour and colour. Here's how to pick the healthiest traditional foods of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Israel.

### Healthy ingredients, tasty offerings

This region's typical cuisine is quite healthy. Vegetables such as tomato, cucumber and onion are plentiful. Chicken and lamb are usually grilled rather than fried, thus reducing the fat content. Chickpeas and lentils offer a healthy dose of heart-smart fibre. Fat mostly comes from healthy olive oil, sesame seeds and nuts, which all help lower cholesterol levels.

### Appetizers (Mezze)

Watch your portion sizes and enjoy these best bets:

*Hummus*: a garlic-infused dip made of chickpeas and sesame seed paste

*Baba ganouj*: roasted eggplant with olive oil (if it has mayonnaise, skip it)

*Fattoush*: a salad of toasted pita bread, cucumbers, tomatoes and mint

*Lentil soup*: a nourishing blend of lentils, carrot and spices



*Tabouleh*: a salad of chopped tomato, cucumber, onion and parsley mixed with bulgur

### Entrées

Pair grilled meat with vegetables. Opt for whole-wheat pita if it is available. Try:

*Shish kebab*: grilled chicken, beef or lamb

*Mujaddara*: spiced lentils and rice

*Shawarma*: marinated chicken or lamb, slowly cooked and shaved thinly to serve in a pita

### Watch out for:

Calories add up quickly with heavy sauce or deep-fried options. Stick with a bit of hummus and labneh (thick yogurt). Falafel (fried chickpea patties) aren't your best choice, nor is kibbeh (bulgur and chopped meat) if it's been fried.

## HEALTH NOTES

### ◆ Something to remember during Breast Cancer Awareness Month:

The disease is the most common cancer among women in Canada. This year, an estimated 23,400 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, according to the Breast Cancer Society of Canada. The good news: Since the mid 1990s, deaths from breast cancer have declined in all ages and in every age group. All provinces and territories offer screenings to women ages 50 to 69. For more information, visit [www.bccsc.ca](http://www.bccsc.ca).

### ◆ It's Influenza Immunization Awareness Month —

time to get a flu shot. The annual influenza vaccine is the best protection against catching the flu, along with regular hand washing. Flu season in Canada usually is from November to April. The best time to get vaccinated is between October and December, says [FightFlu.ca](http://FightFlu.ca). Read more about the flu on page 3.

### ◆ When was the last time you checked your headlights?

Headlights dim over time, so if your car is over five years old, make sure they're still bright. If not, replace your bulbs. You should also check your headlight lens (the headlight's outer covering). It should be completely clear, not cloudy or grey. If you can't see your headlight bulb through the lens, then replace or restore it by purchasing a headlight lens restoration and cleaning kit.



# Autism and Family Stress

Once considered rare, autism is diagnosed in 1 in 110 children, according to Autism Speaks Canada. Primary features of autism include speech/communication delays, social withdrawal and behavioural problems. Having a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often presents several significant challenges for families:

**Grief:** Parents may mourn the hopes they once had for their child and family.

**Financial and career concerns:** Costly evaluations and therapies can create debt, displacing family vacations or other opportunities. One parent may stop working to coordinate the treatment of the child with autism.

**Lack of support:** Family and friends may not understand autism, causing them to withdraw or criticize. Childcare, though desirable, can be elusive.

**Marital problems:** The stress of managing the autistic child can lead to parental fighting. A parent with a greater share of responsibilities may become resentful.

## Energy In, Energy Out

Whether you gain, lose or stay at the same weight depends on your energy balance. That's the number of calories you burn versus the number of calories you consume (through what you eat and drink). If you burn more than you take in, you will lose weight.

Canada's Food Guide offers a guide to calories taken in versus calories burned through physical activity. We feature several age and activity ranges here.

MEN		Activity Level		
Age	Sedentary	Low Active	Active	
19-30	2,500	2,700	3,000	
31-50	2,350	2,600	2,900	
51-70	2,150	2,350	2,650	
WOMEN		Activity Level		
Age	Sedentary	Low Active	Active	
19-30	1,900	2,100	2,350	
31-50	1,800	2,000	2,250	
51-70	1,650	1,850	2,100	

October is  
Autism Awareness Month



**More information** → Autism Speaks Canada, [www.autismspeaks.ca/autism-speaks-canada](http://www.autismspeaks.ca/autism-speaks-canada) • Autism Canada Foundation, [www.autismcanada.org](http://www.autismcanada.org)

**Guilt/blame/shame:** Parents may blame themselves or each other for the autism. Also, children with ASD can exhibit bizarre behaviour in public, causing strangers to stare or offer unsolicited advice.

**Sibling issues:** Brothers and sisters might feel jealous of the extra attention that an autistic sibling gets, angry about destructive behaviour or afraid that the sibling will embarrass them in front of friends.

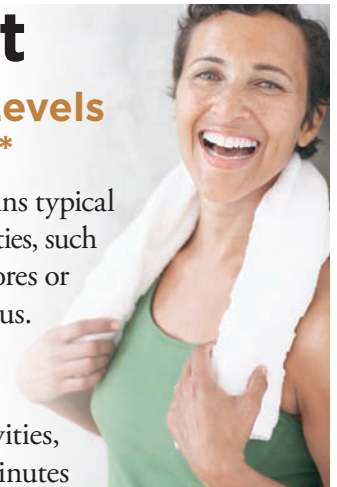
## Activity Levels Defined\*

• **Sedentary** means typical daily living activities, such as household chores or walking to the bus.

• **Low Active** means typical daily living activities, plus 30 to 60 minutes of daily moderate activity, such as walking 5 to 7 km/h (3.1 to 4.3 mph).

• **Active** means typical daily living activities, plus at least 60 minutes of daily moderate activity.

\*Not for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Your calorie needs may differ from those shown here. To learn more, visit Canada's Food Guide at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php).



Back pain is a very common affliction, and it can range from inconvenient to incapacitating. While back pain is often treatable, you can prevent it from starting in the first place. Here are some strategies to keep your back strong and healthy:

- 1 Practice good posture.
- 2 When sitting, keep your knees slightly higher than your hips.
- 3 Stand with one foot in front of the other and your knees slightly bent.
- 4 Limit heavy lifting; when you do lift, use your legs — not your back — by bending at the knees and lowering your hips.
- 5 When moving a heavy object, push it rather than pull it, so you can use your arms and legs instead of your back.
- 6 Keep your back muscles strong through regular resistance exercises.
- 7 Maintain a healthy weight.
- 8 Keep your bones strong by regularly getting enough calcium and vitamin D.
- 9 Avoid smoking — nicotine is bad for your discs, which cushion your spine.

**Red flags:** Call your doctor or health care provider right away if you experience the following:

- numbness or tingling
- severe ongoing pain
- pain after an injury
- pain with fever
- difficulty urinating
- weakness or leg numbness

# STRAIGHT TALK | *About Medications*

It pays to be an educated consumer, especially when you take prescription drugs. The more you know, the more likely you are to take medications safely and effectively.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

**Is medication the only choice?** Non-drug therapies, lifestyle changes and prevention measures can reduce or eliminate the need for medication.

**What side effects should I watch for?** Pharmacies generally attach an information sheet to each prescription, which can help you recognize if a medication is causing side effects.

**Are new drugs better?** While the latest therapies can improve treatment, unknown side effects may appear once drugs have been on the market longer. Seek out unbiased and reputable information about new medication before you take it.

**Is it safe to order my medications online?** Buying medications online can save time and money. However, it pays to be cautious. Ask your health plan for recommendations or use a service from a major pharmacy chain. Only use



pharmacies that require a prescription from your doctor or health care provider, provide contact information (including a phone number and a street address and have a licensed pharmacist you can contact.

**TIP** → Check to make sure the pharmacy is a member in good standing of the Canadian International Pharmacy Association ([www.cipa.com](http://www.cipa.com)). Also look for a Pharmacy Checker rating ([www.pharmacychecker.com](http://www.pharmacychecker.com)).

**Can I take fewer medications?** Ask your doctor or health care provider if lifestyle changes could reduce your need for medications.

## Keep Flu A-W-A-Y

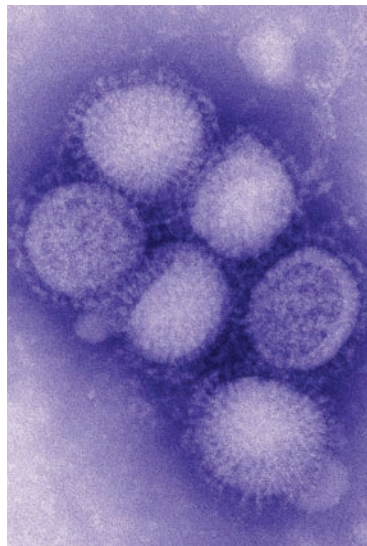
While children and the elderly are most at risk of serious influenza complications, Health Canada recommends the flu shot for most everyone. What else can you do? Practice **A-W-A-Y**:

**A**void close contact with people who are sick. If you become sick, stay home and get plenty of rest.

**W**ash your hands with soap and water often. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

**A**void touching your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent the spread of germs. And cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your forearm if you cough or sneeze.

**Y**ield to safe and healthy habits — get a good night's sleep, eat nutritious foods, exercise often, manage stress and drink plenty of fluids.



*The H1N1 influenza virus. © Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.)*

## PRODUCE PICK of the Month

### Chestnuts



These brown beauties are extremely low in fat and make a fantastic snack. They're also a source of vitamin C and folate. They impart a mild, sweet flavour and gourmet flair to everything from stuffing to desserts. Purchase chestnuts that are heavy, firm, dark and shiny with no evidence of mould. Carefully score the shell with a knife, place in a single layer on a baking pan, then bake at 121°C (250°F) until light brown inside. Peel them when cooled.

## KNOW YOUR Numbers

### What's Your Waist?



While many articles on weight focus on body-mass index (BMI) as the key measurement, waist circumference is important as well. Women with a waist at or above **88 centimetres** (35 inches), and men with a waist at or above **102 centimetres** (40 inches), are at increased risk of health problems (including type 2 diabetes), even if their BMI is normal. Fat carried around the waist appears to carry a greater risk than fat on the hips and thighs. To check, wrap a tape measure snugly around your bare belly just above your hip bones and exhale. If the number is too high, talk with your doctor or health care provider about steps you can take.

## STAY IN TOUCH

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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# Deflate Food Inflation

If you've been to the grocery store lately, you've no doubt noticed that the price of most foods has increased significantly.

Why? Reasons vary from rising agricultural prices, increased oil prices and on and on. There are several ways to make your food dollars stretch further.

Here are some tips you may be missing:

### 1] Visit the store less often.

The more time you spend in the grocery store, the more likely you are to give in to tempting goodies you don't need.

**2] Buy in season.** Simple laws of supply and demand teach that plentiful items should be cheaper. Find out when your favourite produce items are in season and try to cook or eat those items.

**3] Grow your own.** Many vegetables grow well in large garden pots or garden boxes. Community gardens may offer sharing opportunities too.

**4] Compare unit costs,** not creative packaging or marketing. Many stores will have deals on items that sound like a must-have. Take the "10 for \$10 deal". It's easy to understand and each item is only \$1! The lesson learned later? Each item is available for just 78 cents most days.




**5] Cash in with coupons.** Not all coupon providers require a membership or an e-mail address. If you don't have a neighbourhood newspaper, look for coupon inserts left behind at eateries or coffee shops. If you use a smart phone, social networking offers many opportunities to save.

### Body Bulletin takeaway →

While you can't control food costs, you have plenty of ways to save. Knowledge is power.



## Creamy Pumpkin Soup

- 
- 15ml (1 tbsp) olive oil
  - 250ml (1 cup) onion, minced
  - 500ml (2 cups) fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
  - 2ml (½ tsp) ground cumin
  - 2ml (½ tsp) garlic powder
  - 2ml (½ tsp) chili powder
  - 1ml (¼ tsp) salt
  - 300ml (1 ¼ cups) canned pumpkin puree (not pie filling)
  - 250ml (1 cup) buttermilk
  - 10ml (2 tsp) fresh lime juice

1. In medium saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat and sauté onion until translucent, 5-6 minutes.
2. Add broth, seasonings and pumpkin; stir and cook until bubbly. Lower heat, cover pot and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add buttermilk and simmer about 5 minutes more; do not boil. Tip: Beat with an electric whisk to create a creamier texture.
4. Stir in lime juice; pour into bowls and serve hot or chilled. Garnishes: a dollop of light sour cream with chopped green chili or pecans.

### Nutrition Facts

MAKES 4 300ML (1 ¼ CUP) SERVINGS.

Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 133	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4.1g	<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 10.5g
Saturated Fat .8g	Dietary Fibre 1.4g
<b>Cholesterol</b> 2.5mg	Sugars 7.5g
<b>Sodium</b> 281mg	<b>Protein</b> 5.6g

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