

# Celebrate *healthy living*

2020 Week Three



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Walk Kansas

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## Eat More Plants

Most people in Blue Zones® eat a wide variety of seasonal, local fruits and vegetables and only minimal amounts of meat. Their meals are primarily plant-based and meat is more of a condiment rather than the focus. This week, we will explore the Power 9® trait Plant Slant.

Eating plant-based means that your meals are mostly plants: vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, along with beans, seeds, and nuts. In Blue Zones® communities, people eat little to no processed food. Their eating patterns ebb and flow with the seasons, creating natural variety throughout the year.

In the US, processed foods have become a staple. People rely on and value convenience, and some minimally processed foods have a place in a healthful diet. These include bagged spinach and salad greens, cut vegetables, and roasted nuts, canned (packed in water) and frozen fruits, vegetables, and tuna.

Foods with added ingredients to enhance flavor and texture (sweeteners, spices, oils, colors, and preservatives) can be consumed occasionally. These include jarred pasta sauce, salad dressing, yogurt, and cake mixes.

Heavily processed foods should be avoided when possible. This includes ready-to-eat foods, such as crackers, chips, and deli meat. The most heavily processed foods are frozen pizza and pre-made meals (except for those you prep and freeze yourself).

There are many benefits of eating a diet rooted in plant-based foods including a lower risk for developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, and cognitive conditions. Those who follow the Plant Slant eating style have a lower risk of dying from heart disease. Eating mostly plants can help prevent – and reverse – heart disease, lower blood pressure, and improve blood cholesterol. You can also prevent, manage,

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and even reverse type 2 diabetes by following a plant-based diet. A plant-based diet can also help you naturally reduce calorie intake and aid in weight loss and maintaining a healthy weight.

Plants naturally support your immune system because they have essential nutrients that you cannot get from other foods. Rich in phytochemicals and antioxidants, plants help keep your cells healthy and your body in balance so your immune system can function at its best.

Put a Plant Slant into your eating style by filling two-thirds of your plate with plant-based foods. The remaining one-third should be a lean protein like chicken or fish, or a plant protein like beans. Replace heavily processed foods with fruits and vegetables. Make your own frozen meals. Enjoy a large salad with a meat condiment, a bowl meal, or stir fry to incorporate more plants every day.

## Intervals Boost Fitness

You can boost your fitness by adding short bursts of intense activity, or “intervals.” Research shows that alternating these intense activity bursts with lighter activity can be better for your overall health than slow, sustained exercise.

The key is starting at a level that is right for you and build from there. If you walk for exercise, start by adding a 30-second interval of brisk walking or jogging several times during your walk.

For more information on adding intervals, check this newsletter from 2018: <https://www.walkkansas.org/doc/newsletter/2018/week4.pdf>

(To view newsletters from the previous 10 years of Walk Kansas go to [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org))



## Walk Kansas Week 3

- » Get outside and walk each day. (Practice physical distancing if walking with others.)
- » Prep several meals and freeze for later use.
- » Take inventory of heavily processed foods you buy. Can you replace some of these with more healthful options?
- » Talk with your teammates about how you plan to incorporate the Power 9®, Plant Slant.
- » Keep fresh fruit on your counter and prepped veggies in your refrigerator for easy snacking.
- » Plant an herb garden in the ground or a pot. Check here for more information:  
<https://hnr.k-state.edu/doc/hort-tips/vegetables/Herbs.pdf>  
<https://extension2.missouri.edu/g6470>

## Gardening for Exercise

Gardening and yard care are physical activities you can enjoy for a lifetime. As with any type of activity, it pays to warm up your body before you do any type of gardening activity. Start by walking for about 5 minutes and do some basic stretching to lubricate your joints.

Once you are warmed up, there are four basic rules to follow to avoid painful gardening and lifting.

1. Stay in a neutral position whenever possible. Think about bringing the garden up to you, or going down to where your garden is, and try to avoid twisting movements, which cause back stress.
2. Lift with your legs. These muscles are stronger than your back muscles.
3. Keep what you are lifting balanced and close to your body. Holding at arm's length adds 7 to 10 times more stress on your back.
4. Limit twisting. Tighten abdominal muscles as you are lifting. If you need to turn while lifting, pivot your feet instead of twisting your back.

A good cool-down to gardening is just as important as a warm-up. While it may be tempting to just sit down right after hours of activity, slow walking is better. Follow up with more stretches — a little slower and longer this time.

# Chicken Caprese Salad

Makes 3 meal-size servings

## Ingredients for marinade/dressing:

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon salt

## Ingredients for salad:

- 1 chicken breast (6 ounces), flattened to even thickness\*
- 6 cups Romaine lettuce leaves
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes
- ½ cup mini mozzarella cheese balls
- 1 avocado, sliced
- ¼ cup basil leaves
- Salt and pepper, to taste

## Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients for the marinade/dressing until combined.
3. Do not rinse raw poultry. Place chicken breast in a plastic zip-top bag, then seal. Wash hands with soap and water. Use a heavy flat object to pound the breast (such as a rolling pin) until it is an even thickness, approximately ½ inch.
4. Wash hands with soap and water after handling uncooked chicken.
5. Measure 4 tablespoons of the marinade/dressing and pour into the bag to evenly coat chicken. Reserve the untouched marinade to use as a dressing for the salad.
6. Heat 1 teaspoon of oil in a grill pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Grill or sear chicken

breast on each side until golden and chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F. Set chicken aside and allow to rest while you prepare the salads.

7. Wash lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, and basil by gently rubbing under cold running water. Cut lettuce into bite-sized pieces; slice tomatoes in half; slice avocado into ¼ inch slices; thinly slice basil.
8. Divide lettuce, tomatoes, and cheese balls equally between 3 serving plates. Slice chicken into strips. Place chicken and avocado slices on top, dividing into 3 portions. Top with basil strips, drizzle with the remaining dressing, then season with salt and pepper (to taste) before serving.

## Nutrition Information per serving 2-cup:

330 calories; 22 g fat (0 trans fat, 5 g saturated fat); 16 g carbohydrates; 20 g protein; 6 g fiber; 920 mg sodium; 3 g added sugars.



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### Kansas State University Walk Kansas

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