

With spring finally here, add some fresh foods into the diet. The season synonymous with change provides a variety of seasonal produce that can recharge a diet, as well as aid in weight-loss efforts.

Incorporating specific springtime staples into the diet can help keep a person fuller and more satisfied while improving overall health. TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the nonprofit weight-loss support organization, offers the following tasteful recommendations that work overtime to help benefit the body.

- **Sugar snap peas**—One cup of these sweet veggies contains only 26 calories. Besides being loaded with flavor and crunch, they also are full of fiber and vitamin K.

- **Ginger**—According to researchers at Florida's University of Miami, just a teaspoon of ginger can make a person feel full twice as quickly. This is due to the gingerol and zingibain inside ginger that act as powerful appetite suppressants. Ginger is also a great anti-inflammatory.

- **Green onions**—Also known as spring onions, these have all the flavor of regular onions without the smell. Stanford University researchers have found the high amounts of sulfur in spring onions help the pancreas burn carbs for fuel before they are stored in the body as fat. Add these to recipes for a little flavor and color.

- **Eggplant** can be incorporated into many recipes as a low-calorie meat replacement or eaten on its own. Baked or grilled, eggplant is a great choice at just 20 calories per cup. Its low sugar content and muscle-strengthening high protein and potassium levels make it a powerhouse of taste and nutrition.

- **Button mushrooms**—According to UCLA research, the plant protein in button mushrooms slows down carbohydrate absorption in the intestines and helps the body soak up and burn sugars fast, aiding weight-loss efforts. The study has shown that eating one cup a day could accelerate weight loss by 50 percent.

- **Peppermint**—Add this fresh and light herb into the diet as often as possible. Studies from Chicago's Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation have shown that adding one tablespoon of fresh, chopped peppermint to a meal can cause a person to feel full on 100 fewer calories. Plus, its lively flavor and smell are perfect for the season!

- **Cucumber**—A spring and summertime favorite, cucumbers are a guilt-free flavor booster to any salad or a great snack on their own. One cup of cucumber slices equals only 16 calories. They are water-rich and high in fiber, so they work double to feel full.