

9 Steps to a Healthy Diet

1. Consume a variety of foods within and among the basic food groups while staying within energy needs.
2. Control caloric intake to manage body weight.
3. Be physically active every day.
4. Increase daily intake of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and nonfat and low-fat milk and milk products.
5. Choose fats wisely for good health.
6. Choose carbohydrates wisely for good health.
7. Choose and prepare foods with little salt.
8. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.
9. Keep food safe to eat.

1- EAT A WIDE VARIETY OF FOODS A healthy diet can include all foods. Variety is important because no one food can provide all the nutrients the body needs for optimal health. Try new foods to tantalize your taste buds and to vary your nutritional intake. We can make many choices within each food group. Choices may be made to increase intake of a specific nutrient like fiber or to decrease intake of fat. For example, in the protein-rich 'meat' group, beans are a low fat, high fiber option compared to ground beef, which is high in fat, especially saturated fat and low in fiber. In the fruit group, whole fruit is a higher fiber choice than fruit juice. In the dairy group a low fat choice such as 1% milk is a healthier choice than whole milk. If you are lactose-intolerant, calcium-fortified soy or rice milk are good alternate sources of calcium. Look for brands that have at least 25% of the Daily Value for Calcium and Vitamin D. When choosing breads or cereals, choose products that list "whole" grain as the first ingredient. These foods provide higher amounts of health-promoting fiber than other choices. Foods containing essential nutrients can help us prevent disease and even restore our health. Finding a balance between foods that promote health and those that may be less nutritious is important for long term well being. Strive to choose foods that are better for your health more often. Foods and beverages that are less nutritious do not have to be eliminated but should be consumed in moderation or eaten only occasionally. Making healthy food choices more often can make the difference between health and disease.

2- CHOOSE YOUR FOODS WISELY What and how much you eat and how much you exercise go hand in hand in controlling your weight. Energy expended must equal energy consumed to stay at the same weight. To lose weight you can eat less or exercise more. If you're trying to lose weight, the best choice is to do both! Some ways to eat less include choosing smaller portions, consuming more raw fruits and vegetables, and limiting foods that are higher in calories, especially high fat foods, such as donuts and potato chips. The healthiest way to reduce calorie intake is to reduce one's intake of added sugars, solid fats and alcohol—they all provide calories, but do not provide essential nutrients. Fat has more than twice as many calories as carbohydrates or proteins. All fats have 9 calories per gram, compared to protein and carbohydrates, which have 4 calories per gram and alcohol which has 7 calories per gram.

3- GET UP AND MOVE ! Make physical activity a part of your day. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of certain diseases, including high blood pressure, stroke, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer and osteoporosis. To reduce the risk of chronic disease and promote fitness, it is recommended that adults should be physically active at least 30 minutes each day. Increasing your physical activity level to 60 minutes of moderate activity each day will help manage your weight and increase your energy expenditure by about 150 to 200 calories. Adults who have previously lost weight may need 60 to 90 minutes of moderate physical activity daily to avoid weight gain. Children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.

4- CHOOSE FATS CAREFULLY Fats and oils are part of a healthful diet. Fats supply energy and essential fatty acids and serve as carriers for the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. Fats serve as building blocks of membranes and play a key regulatory role in numerous body functions. Dietary fat is found in foods from both plant and animal origin. The type and amount of fat you eat makes a difference. High intakes of saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol increase the risk of unhealthy blood lipid levels which, in turn, may increase the risk of coronary heart disease. Other chronic health problems, such as obesity, may be caused or worsened by high fat diets. Saturated fat and trans fats (fats that are solid at room temperature), appear to carry the greatest amount of risk. The main way to keep saturated fat intake low is to limit intake of animal fats that are found in foods such as butter, ice cream, bacon, sausage and fatty meats. To limit dietary intake of cholesterol, limit intake of foods such as eggs and organ meats. By looking at the food label, consumers can select products that are lowest in saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol. Eating less processed foods is the most effective means of reducing intake of trans fats. Trans fats are listed in the food ingredient list on product packaging as "partially hydrogenated" oils. Some fats are healthier choices, such as polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats, such as, canola and olive oil. These fats are liquid at room temperature and have heart protecting properties. Fish are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are highly polyunsaturated fatty acids and have been found to be health promoting.

5- CARBOHYDRATES FOR ENERGY Carbohydrates are our bodies' main energy source and provide fiber and essential nutrients. Carbohydrates are found in fruits, vegetables, grains, and milk. Choose carbohydrates wisely. When choosing a bread or cereal, select ones made with whole grains, instead of refined grains. Avoid foods that are high in sugar such as soda pop or candy. Keep in mind that the greater the consumption of foods containing large amounts of added sugar, the harder it is to eat a balanced and nutritious diet without gaining weight. Consumption of added sugars provides calories while providing little, if any, of the essential nutrients.

6- WATCH YOUR SALT INTAKE On average, the higher an individual's salt intake, the higher an individual's blood pressure will be. Most Americans consume more salt than they need. Thus, reducing salt intake as much as possible is one way to reduce blood pressure. It is recommended that no more than 2,300 mg of sodium be included in the average diet. This is the amount of sodium that is found in about one teaspoon of salt. The amount is less for those with high blood pressure and other groups at risk such as African Americans, middle-aged and older adults. Much of the sodium the U.S. population consumes comes from processed foods, such as canned soups and processed meats, like ham, which can include up to 1,000 mg per serving. Check out the sodium content of a food on the Nutrition

Facts Label. [Nutrition Facts Labels](#) can help you compare and identify prepared foods that are lower in sodium. Eating a potassium-rich diet, on the other hand, is a way to reduce blood pressure. A potassium-rich diet blunts the effects of salt on blood pressure, may reduce the risk of developing kidney stones, and possible decrease bone loss with age. Excellent sources of potassium include leafy green vegetables, root vegetables and fruits such as oranges, bananas, cantaloupes and melons.

7- LIMIT or ELIMINATE ALCOHOL If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. Adults who choose to drink should limit consumption to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. Alcoholic beverages supply calories but few nutrients. Alcoholic beverages should not be consumed by women who may become pregnant, are pregnant or those who are breast feeding, children, adolescents, and others.

8- KEEP FOOD SAFE TO EAT It is vital to avoid foods that are contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins, and chemical and physical contaminants. It is estimated that every year about 76 million people in the United States become ill from pathogens in food; and of these, about 5,000 die. Consumers can take simple measures to reduce their risk of foodborne illness, especially in the home.

Wash your hands, food contact surfaces, and fruits and vegetables. (Meat and poultry should not be washed or rinsed.) Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing foods. Cook foods to recommended temperatures to kill microorganisms. Chill (refrigerate) perishable foods properly. Listeriosis is a serious infection caused by eating contaminated food. Infants, young children, pregnant women, older adults and those who are immunocompromised should not eat products that have a high risk of contamination from the bacteria that causes listeriosis. Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk, raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs, raw or undercooked meat and poultry, refrigerated meat spreads, pates, smoked seafood, unpasteurized juices and raw sprouts. Avoid deli meats, soft cheeses (such as Mexican-style fresh cheese, brie and feta) and frankfurters. For safety, deli meats and frankfurters should be reheated to steaming hot. Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children are advised to avoid some types of fish that have higher mercury contents. For women of childbearing age and children under the age of 6:

Tuna - limit to 1 can (6 ounces) of tuna per week for women of childbearing age.
Children under age 6 should eat less canned tuna than adults. 1 tablespoon per week for children under 25 lbs. 2 tablespoons per week for children under 50 lbs. 3 tablespoons per week for children under 75 lbs. Do not eat swordfish, shark, tilefish, king mackerel or fresh caught or frozen tuna steak. Find out about any "Fish Advisories" in your area.

About the Author

<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/nutrition/diet.htm>

Source: <http://www.eatsee.com>