

Health tip: Everyday nutrition



A person's diet is an essential component of their current and future state of well-being. Healthy eating has many benefits. Eating a healthier diet may decrease the risk of getting diabetes, increase energy levels, improve heart health and help with weight management.¹

Healthy eating tips

Although there are countless "diets" and differing food philosophies, most will agree on some basic healthy eating habits. Some healthy eating tips include:

- Eating at regular intervals
- Eating a variety of foods
- Aiming for balanced meals
- Drinking water regularly and abundantly
- Including a lot of vegetables and moderate amounts of fruits in many colors

A healthier diet should provide adequate nutrients, including micronutrients and macronutrients. Micronutrients include vitamins and minerals that the body requires in smaller amounts and must be acquired from one's diet. Macronutrients are large and visible to the eye and are needed in larger quantities. Macronutrients include fats, proteins and carbohydrates, and are responsible for creating energy and building up the body's cells.

The quality of the nutrients is important

Examples of high quality carbohydrates include: Starchy vegetables such as yams, sweet potatoes, winter squash, etc. beans and legumes; and whole grains.

High quality protein sources include: grass-fed meat (sparingly), skinless poultry, wild caught fish and seafood, eggs, tofu, tempeh, cottage cheese and yogurt.

When it comes to fats, they are not created equal. Certain fats are beneficial and important to health such as olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds, fatty fish and coconut. Other fats may be harmful to your health and should be limited. These include as highly processed vegetable oils, soybean and corn oil, margarine, shortening and saturated animal fats.



The importance of water

Although not categorized as a micronutrient or macronutrient, water is vital for the body to function properly. Our bodies are made up of 50% to 60% water and states of dehydration, and even suboptimal hydration, may lead to symptoms such as fatigue, constipation, dry skin and brain fog.

A person's hydration needs vary depending on many factors; however, a good rule of thumb is to drink $\frac{1}{2}$ your body weight in ounces. For example, if you weigh 150 lbs., you should aim to consume 75 ounces of water or more each day.

Understanding portion sizes

Eating healthier is the goal; however, the portions of healthier foods are also important, especially for weight loss and maintenance. Calorie counting may be tedious and is not an exact science. A better strategy may be to use visual representations to ensure proper portions. Examples include:

- Fist = 1 cup, use for vegetables
- Deck of cards or computer mouse = 3 to 4 ounces, use for protein
- Tennis ball = ½ cup, use for grains such as rice or starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes
- Cupped handful = 1 ounce, use for nuts
- Tip of thumb = 1 tablespoon fat, use for butter or oil

Using smaller serving dishes may also help ensure proper portion sizes. Eating from a salad plate instead of a larger plate will help manage your portion sizes.

Another area to consider when eating healthier is to ensure you are eating a balanced diet. Load your plate with a lean protein source, a complex carbohydrate and a healthy fat source; additionally, load up on colorful fruits and veggies. When considering fruits and vegetables, more is always better. Fruits and veggies are powerful allies in maintaining health. Consumption of fruits and veggies may help to prevent cancer, decrease oxidative stress, maintain a healthy heart and promote a healthier weight.²

A healthier diet does not occur overnight. Focus on making better choices bite by bite, day by day, and you may be on your way to a healthier diet and lifestyle!



Sources:

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Benefits of Healthy Eating. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html>. May 2021. Accessed August 2023.

² National Cancer Institute, Fruit and Vegetable Consumption. https://progressreport.cancer.gov/prevention/fruit_vegetable. August 2023. Accessed August 2023.

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