

Nutrition Tips



Good nutrition is a tough topic. There are so many different theories that it is easy to get everything tangled up and not know where to turn. This article won't give you any magical food combinations, but it can give you a basis for eating a nutritionally sound diet. Whether or not you are trying to lose weight, lower your blood pressure or just trying to eat healthier, there are 9 guidelines you should follow.

1. Drink more water! Water is a nutrient that is needed for the life of all cells. It makes up between 60 and 70% of the body's total weight. It also helps the body eliminate wastes, transport nutrients and regulate body temperature. Dehydration can cause headaches, inability to concentrate, loss of energy and sometimes your body even mistakes thirst for hunger. Water is even more important to your body if you exercise, since you are losing a lot of fluids through sweat.
2. Always eat breakfast! Your mother was right; breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast replenishes your body with important nutrients and critical energy after a long overnight fast. In one study of people who were successful at maintaining weight loss, eating breakfast was practiced. Students who eat breakfast are more able to concentrate and perform their best at school. Breakfast can be simple, fast AND nutritious. Bring your breakfast with you. Pack a banana, some whole-wheat crackers and a piece of low fat string cheese and you have a very nutritious, tasty and quick breakfast. Breakfast possibilities are endless.
3. Watch portion sizes. With growing portion sizes it is easy to take in more calories than we need. Overtime, this can add up. Visit the USDA ChooseMyPlate website to learn about portions that are right for you. Most restaurant portions are larger than we need, so consider taking half of your meal home and enjoy it later.
4. Eat more fruits and vegetables! Eating enough fruits and vegetables every day can help to reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and chronic disease, as well as provide important nutrients to maintain good health. Choosing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables ensures that you are getting a balance of vitamins and adds variety to your meals. Try eating a different color fruit and vegetable each day!
5. Aim for foods rich in complex carbohydrates, fiber and whole grain. Complex carbohydrates are your body's source of energy, especially the brain and nervous system. They are also critical in helping maintain tissue protein and metabolizing fat. Choose whole grain rich foods to lower your risk of disease and supply your body with beneficial nutrients. Fiber is important for good digestive function. Fiber is found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and nuts.
6. Limit your intake of fat, saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol. Some fat is needed in the diet, but most Americans eat too much fat. The recommended amount of fat for a healthy diet for adults is 30% of your total calories. So, for example if you eat 2,000 calories per day, you would multiply that by 30% ($2,000 \times .30 = 600$) which would equal



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600 calories. A gram of fat consists of 9 calories, so 600 divided by 9 equals 66.66. So you would need approximately 66 grams of fat per day. Of course, you can always lower that amount, but never lower it below 20% of your daily caloric intake.

7. **Try to limit your sugar and sodium intake.** The major sources of added sugar in the U.S. are soft drinks, cakes, cookies, pies, fruit drinks, candy and ice cream. They provide few nutrients but a lot of calories. Did you know that a can of soda has 10 teaspoons of sugar? This adds up to about 200 – 300 extra calories a day, which can lead to a weight gain of 20lbs. in one year. And that is just one can of soda!

8. **Make sure to eat a variety of foods.** Your body thrives on variety. Every food you eat provides different nutrients for your body. Eating the same food or foods over and over robs your body of much needed nutrients. Try changing each day's menu around so that you are trying something new each day. Moderation is also very important when it comes to nutrition. You should be able to have your favorite ice cream, just don't eat it every day and pay careful attention to those portion sizes.

9. **And last but not least...MOVE MORE!!!** (you knew that was coming!) Physical Activity goes hand in hand with good nutrition. Physical activity helps to strengthen your heart and your bones, lower your blood pressure, increases your metabolism, slows down the aging process, improves your immune system, reduces stress, helps you sleep better, helps to maintain a healthy weight and can raise your self-esteem. Plus, studies have found that those who exercise on a regular basis eat more nutritiously than those who do not exercise. You don't have to go to the gym 2 hours a day to reap the benefits. Even two to three, 10-15 minute bouts of exercise throughout the day will do your body good. It doesn't matter what you do—just do something!

Your health and how you feel determine, in a big way, how much you get out of life. Eating right and exercising keep you healthy and feeling well. Healthy living is not as hard as it seems, nor does it have to be unpleasant. However, it does take some effort and commitment. Make healthy eating and exercising a family affair. Teach your kids the importance of taking care of their health by taking care of yours. Small steps make big differences!

For more facts on healthy eating and physical activity, please contact Healthy Orange at 360-6680. You can also visit www.usda.gov or www.cdc.gov for additional information. See the USDA ChooseMyPlate website at www.choosemyplate.gov.



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