



Eating Healthy

There is a lot of confusion today about how to eat healthy. And there seem to be as many diets as there are people. You'll find one study that tells you something is good for you and right behind it could be another study that tells you to avoid that food altogether. You might be wondering how you get through this maze of confusing and sometimes conflicting information.

Well, rest easy. All foods can be part of a healthy eating plan when consumed in sensible amounts. Just start with the basics:

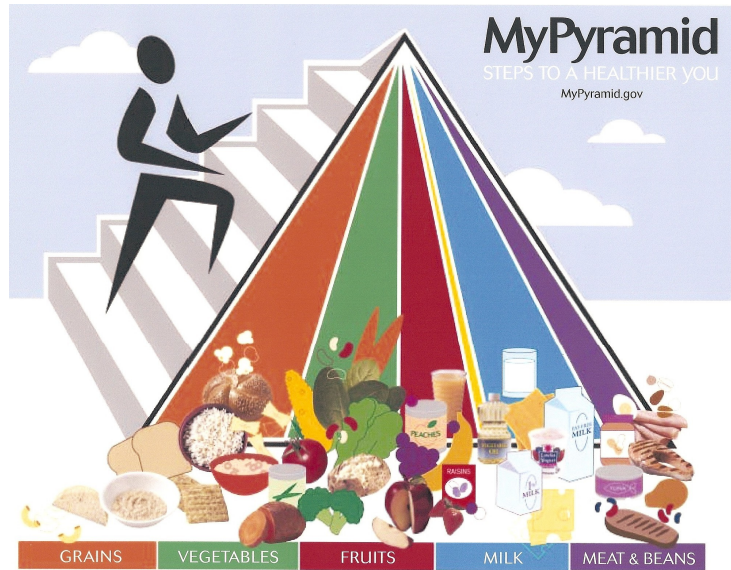
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Add whole grains and fiber to your diet.
- Learn which fats and oils are good for you, which ones to avoid, and how much to have in your diet.
- Choose lean sources of protein.
- Be careful about how much sugar you take in.

In the next few pages, we'll take a deeper look at the whole idea of eating healthy. We will look at the basic food groups, dietary supplements, different diets, and resources you can use if you want to learn more about this important subject.

The Basic Food Groups

There are five basic food groups:

1. Grains
2. Vegetables
3. Fruits
4. Milk
5. Meat and Beans

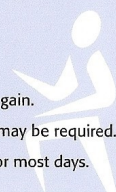


Fats, oils and sweets are another food group but are not considered one of the basic groups.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) created a way of looking at healthy eating called the Food Guide Pyramid. It showed the elements of a healthy diet.

The USDA recently retired the old Food Guide Pyramid and replaced it with MyPyramid, a new symbol and "interactive food guidance system." Here's a graphic of MyPyramid and you can learn more at MyPyramid.gov.

The table below provides an overview of how one should consume foods in the five basic food groups. Again, this is from the USDA.

GRAINS Make half your grains whole	VEGETABLES Vary your veggies	FRUITS Focus on fruits	MILK Get your calcium-rich foods	MEAT & BEANS Go lean with protein
Eat at least 3 oz. of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day 1 oz. is about 1 slice of bread, about 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice, cereal, or pasta	Eat more dark-green veggies like broccoli, spinach, and other dark leafy greens Eat more orange vegetables like carrots and sweetpotatoes Eat more dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans, and lentils	Eat a variety of fruit Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit Go easy on fruit juices	Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt, and other milk products If you don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources such as fortified foods and beverages	Choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry Bake it, broil it, or grill it Vary your protein routine – choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds
For a 2,000-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to MyPyramid.gov .				
Eat 6 oz. every day	Eat 2½ cups every day	Eat 2 cups every day	Get 3 cups every day; <small>for kids aged 2 to 8, it's 2</small>	Eat 5½ oz. every day
Find your balance between food and physical activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs. Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. About 60 minutes a day of physical activity may be needed to prevent weight gain. For sustaining weight loss, at least 60 to 90 minutes a day of physical activity may be required. Children and teenagers should be physically active for 60 minutes every day, or most days. 		 Know the limits on fats, sugars, and salt (sodium) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make most of your fat sources from fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Limit solid fats like butter, margarine, shortening, and lard, as well as foods that contain these. Check the Nutrition Facts label to keep saturated fats, <i>trans</i> fats, and sodium low. Choose food and beverages low in added sugars. Added sugars contribute calories with few, if any, nutrients. 		

The USDA's MyPyramid is based on the idea that calorie and nutrient needs vary from one person to another. For example, a 30-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman with different levels of exercise and physical activity could have widely different caloric needs. While they should eat a variety of healthy foods from all the food groups, they don't need to eat the same amounts of those foods.

To find out what's right for you, click on www.MyPyramid.gov for a plan that's perfect for you .

Now, let's look at foods and food ingredients in a little more detail.

Grains

There are two kinds of grains—whole grains and refined grains.

- **Whole grains** include whole wheat, oats, and brown rice. They are full of vitamins, minerals and fiber. They are also a great source of energy and are very filling.
- **Refined grains** include white flour, white rice, and pasta. They have fewer vitamins and minerals and aren't as filling because they don't have as much fiber as whole grains.

To find out if something is/is not whole grain, read the food label. The first ingredient listed should be whole wheat, whole grain, or whole oats. And be careful of “multi-grain” products as they may or may not be whole grain.

How do you add more whole grains to your diet? Switch to whole wheat bread instead of white or “enriched” bread, whole wheat pasta instead of regular pasta, brown rice instead of white rice, etc.

Vegetables and Fruits

We all could probably benefit from having more vegetables and fruits in our diets. Vegetables and fruits are full of vitamins, minerals and fiber and most are relatively low in fat and calories.

Vegetables and fruits also have ingredients that may help prevent health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and some types of cancer.

For example, the National Cancer Institute promotes a “5 a Day for Better Health” program that encourages people to eat at least five servings per day of a variety of vegetables and fruits.

Two things to keep in mind:

1. Make sure you rinse vegetables and fruits under running water to make sure they are clean.
2. Eat “dried fruits” in moderation because they are typically less filling than whole fruits and a small amount can have a lot of calories. For example, a quarter cup of raisins contains the same number of calories as two cups of grapes.

Fats

Almost everything you eat has some kind of fat in it. Your body needs fat to work properly, but it's easy to “get too much of a good thing.”

There are “healthy” fats and some “unhealthy” fats:

- **Healthy fats** (known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) can lower the risk for heart disease and other diseases. They include:
 - fish like salmon and mackerel
 - most nuts and seeds
 - oils such as olive oil, canola oil, vegetable oil, and other oils such as almond, corn, safflower, sesame, soybean, sunflower, and walnut oil
 - avocados
 - olives
- **Unhealthy fats** (known as saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol) increase the risk for developing certain diseases, including heart disease. They include:
 - whole-milk products
 - butter and margarine (choose a margarine with “unsaturated vegetable oil” as the first ingredient)
 - red meat (avoid “Prime” and “Choice” cuts)
 - chicken skin
 - cookies and crackers and chips
 - processed foods

Fiber

Fiber is found in plants and is the part of fruits, vegetables and grains that your body cannot digest. Foods from animals do not have any fiber in them.

When you eat plenty of fiber, you help keep your digestive track healthy. People who eat a lot of fiber tend to have fewer colon problems.

Most people need about 20 to 35 grams of fiber each day. You can get fiber from:

- Breads and grain products like bran, oatmeal, whole wheat breads and cereals, and brown rice.
- Vegetables like beans and peas, cabbage and brussel sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower, beets, turnips, carrots, and baked potato skins.
- Fruits with skins or seeds that you eat like apples, pears, strawberries, figs and blueberries.

Protein

Protein is also important to your health. It helps keep your muscles, bones, skin, hair, blood and internal organs healthy.

However, some forms of protein contain too much cholesterol and unhealthy fats. So, it's best to choose lean sources of protein. These include:

- Fish, chicken (skinless), and only the leanest cuts of beef such as select, round, flank and tenderloin. As an alternative to red meat, try pork. For the leanest cuts, choose tenderloin, center-cut roasts and loin chops.
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Tofu, soy milk, soy flour and other soy products
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy products
- Eggs, in moderation. (A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that consuming an average of one egg per day did not have substantial overall impact on the risk of heart disease or stroke among healthy men and women. However, the same study concluded that additional research was needed for those with diabetes.)

While most people get all the protein they need in their regular diets, vegetarians should be sure to get enough protein from plant sources like beans, grain and soy.

Sugar

There's nothing inherently wrong with sugar. A little is fine and it's not harmful for most people. However, sweets tend to have a lot of "empty calories" and can contribute to weight gain.

Most people need to cut back on how much sugar they consume. Here are some tips for doing so:

- Cut back on sugar-sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, lemonade and fruit drinks. Substitute water or sugar-free soft drinks.
- Eat fruit instead of sugary desserts and snacks.
- Check the labels on food packages. Look for names such as brown sugar, sucrose, corn syrup, molasses, fructose, dextrose, corn sweetener, and glucose. You'll be amazed how many foods have lots of sugar in them!

Dietary Supplements

Should you take food supplements like extra vitamins in addition to your diet?

The Mayo Clinic says that, in most cases, you're more likely to improve and protect your health by eating well than by taking supplements. If you depend on supplements rather than eating a variety of foods, you miss the potential benefits of antioxidants, fiber, and other nutrients that only foods can provide.

For example, you can get Vitamin C from a pill or from an orange. But the orange also provides calcium and fiber (among other things) that the pill will not.

Dietary supplements can be helpful for those with special needs. For example, older adults sometimes have difficulty absorbing enough vitamin D and calcium from their diets, and supplements may help.

In any case, one should talk to a doctor or dietician about his/her particular situation.

Essential Nutrients

The body's essential nutrients are composed of chemical elements found in food and used by the body to perform many different functions. Food provides heat, promotes growth, repairs tissues, and regulates body processes.

There are six essential nutrients. Here they are with some information about each nutrient:

- **Carbohydrates**

- Major source of human energy
- Easily digested
- Cheaper source of energy than fats or proteins
- Main dietary sources: bread, pasta, crackers, cereals, potatoes, corn, peas, fruits, sugar, and syrups

- **Fats**

- Provide the most concentrated form of energy but are a more expensive source of energy than carbohydrates
- Maintain body temperature by providing insulation; cushion organs and bones; aid in the absorption of fat soluble vitamins; provide flavor to meals
- Main dietary sources: butter, margarine, oils, cream, fatty meats, cheeses, and egg yolk

- **Proteins**

- Basic components of all body cells
- Essential for building and repairing tissue, regulating body functions, and providing energy and heat
- Proteins are made up of 22 building blocks called amino acids
- Found in meats, fish, milk, cheeses, eggs

- **Vitamins**
 - Organic (living) compounds that are essential to life
 - Important for metabolism, tissue building, and regulating body processes
 - Allow the body to use the energy provided by carbohydrates, fats and proteins
 - Only small amounts are required; a well balanced diet usually supplies adequate amounts

- **Minerals**
 - Inorganic (non living) elements found in all body cells
 - Regulate body fluids, assist in various body functions, contribute to growth, and aid in building tissues

- **Water**
 - Found in all body tissues and is essential for the digestion (breakdown) of food, makes up most of the blood plasma, helps body tissues absorb nutrients, and helps move waste material through the body.

The Importance of Water

Water is one of the most essential elements to good health. It:

- is necessary for the digestion and absorption of food
- helps maintain proper muscle tone
- supplies oxygen and nutrients to the cells
- rids the body of wastes
- serves as a natural air conditioning system

Health officials emphasize the importance of drinking at least eight glasses of clean water each and every day to maintain good health.

Since water contains no calories and can serve as an appetite suppressant and helps the body metabolize stored fat, it may possibly be one of the most significant factors in losing weight.

Vegetarian Diets

There are several types of vegetarian diets:

- The **vegan** or **total vegetarian** diet includes only foods from plants: fruits, vegetables, legumes (dried beans and peas), grains, seeds and nuts.
- The **lactovegetarian** diet includes plant foods plus cheese and other dairy products.
- The **ovo-lactovegetarian** (or **lacto-ovovegetarian**) diet also includes eggs.
- **Semi-vegetarians** don't eat red meat but include chicken and fish with plant foods, dairy products and eggs.

Most vegetarian diets are low in animal products. They're also usually lower than nonvegetarian diets in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. Many studies have shown that vegetarians seem to have a lower risk of obesity, coronary heart disease (which causes heart attack), high blood pressure, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

According to the American Heart Association, vegetarian diets can be healthful and nutritionally sound if they're carefully planned to include essential nutrients. However, a vegetarian diet can be unhealthy if it contains too many calories and not enough important nutrients.

Those on vegetarian diets should ensure they are getting enough protein and iron in the foods they eat.

Resources You Can Use

There are a variety of resources you can turn to for more information on healthy eating. Here are just a few reputable sources of information for you.

- Visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org for daily nutrition tips and information on food, nutrition and the benefits of healthy lifestyles.
- Visit www.5aday.gov for the American Cancer Institute’s “5 a day for Better Health” program encouraging the consumption of vegetables and fruits.
- Visit the USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic.
- Don’t forget to visit www.MyPyramid.gov for information on MyPyramid.