

Eating healthy means balancing what and how much you eat. Try every day to eat from all four food groups, including grains, proteins, fruits and vegetables, and dairy. And try a variety within each group. All foods, if eaten in moderation, can be part of healthy eating.

Making small changes to what you eat can add up to big health benefits, including increased energy and helping you handle stress better.

Here are some ideas to help you develop healthy eating habits. These habits can help you improve your daily nutrition and maintain a healthy weight.

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Nutrition

Tips for Good Health



Include Healthy Fats and Oils

First, learn to spot some of the unhealthy fats you might be eating now. These include saturated fats and trans fats found in fried foods, fatty meats or snacks; partially hydrogenated oil; butter; and some margarines. Then replace these poor choices with healthy fats such as olive, canola, soy and sunflower oils; nuts and seeds; and fatty fish such as salmon. Remember to eat even healthy fats in moderation.

Choose the Right Dairy

Dairy foods give you protein, calcium and other key nutrients. But full-fat versions can add unhealthy fat and extra calories. Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese. (Note: Reduced-fat milk is not recommended for children under age 2. Check with your pediatrician.)

Focus on Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are packed with fiber and nutrients that protect against disease. They also help keep your weight in check and are a filling replacement for high-fat, high-calorie foods. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables for a high-fiber, low-calorie meal. Try adding shredded vegetables to soups, casseroles, chili or omelets.

Size Up Your Portions

Super-sizing trends in restaurants, vending machines, beverages and even plate sizes can lead to overeating and too many calories. Compare the portion you serve with the calories listed for what is considered a serving on the nutrition label. Don't snack from a bag. Portion out servings into a bowl. Stop eating when you get full. You don't always need to clear your plate. It sometimes takes your body 20 minutes after eating to feel full.

Pick Healthy Proteins

Protein comes from many sources, not just meats and other animal products. Consider healthier plant-based proteins and vegetable sources such as peas, beans, lentils, soybeans, nuts, peanuts and whole grains. If you are going to eat animal protein, consider fish and poultry. Did you know the American Heart Association recommends eating fish (particularly cold water fatty fish like salmon) at least two times each week? If you eat red meat, choose small portions of cuts that are low in fat, or use extra-lean ground beef. Avoid processed meats such as hot dogs, most lunchmeats and sausage.

Go for Whole Grains

Whole grains curb hunger, keep blood sugar steady and reduce the risk of many diseases. Whole grains are loaded with protein, fiber and nutrients, which are normally stripped away when whole grains are processed. Choose products with the word "whole" in front of the grain as the first ingredient. Try a new side dish like barley, quinoa or bulgur.

Watch Out for Extra Sugar and Salt

Empty calories from sugary drinks and snacks add up fast. Substitute fresh water instead. Add lemon, lime, orange or cucumber slices for extra snap and taste.

Use the salt shaker carefully. Avoid canned vegetables and soups, most frozen foods, processed meats, lunchmeats, pickles, salted snacks, and packaged potato, rice or pasta mixes. Read labels to check for salt content listed as sodium.

For more information, visit the Wellness Portal through My Health Plan at MedMutual.com/Member. Or check:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
- American Heart Association: heart.org
- United States Department of Agriculture: ChooseMyPlate.gov