

A Healthy Diet

Along with regular exercise, being committed to keeping a healthy diet is one of the most important things you can do to contribute positively to your overall health. Reducing fat in your diet, for example, can lower your risk for certain cancers and certain heart diseases.

An article in the April 26, 2000, issue of *JAMA* reports on the relationship between maintaining a healthy diet and lowering the risk of premature death.

Fats, Oils, Sugars, & Sweets USE SPARINGLY

Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group
2-3 SERVINGS PER DAY



Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, & Nuts Group
2-3 SERVINGS

Vegetable Group
3-5 SERVINGS



Fruit Group
2-4 SERVINGS



Bread, Cereal, Rice, & Pasta Group
6-11 SERVINGS

Adapted from United States Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid

EATING WITH YOUR HEALTH IN MIND:

The most important elements of healthful eating are:

- To eat a daily diet that helps you either lose weight or keep your weight in the range that is considered "healthy" or "ideal" for your height and sex
- To choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat intake
- To eat foods high in fiber
- To reduce the number of calories in your diet that come from processed sugars
- To choose and prepare foods with less salt
- To drink the daily recommended amount of water: 8 to 10 cups (64 to 80 ounces) of water a day
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, drink them in moderation (no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men)

REDUCING FAT IN YOUR DIET:

Less than 30 percent of your daily calories should come from fat.

- Broil, roast, bake, boil, steam, or microwave food; avoid fried foods
- Season vegetables and meats with herbs and spices rather than using fatty sauces, butter, or margarine
- Choose low-fat or skim milk, rather than whole milk
- Substitute plain low-fat yogurt or low-fat cottage cheese whipped in a blender for sour cream or mayonnaise
- Substitute egg whites for whole eggs when baking (substitute 2 eggs without yolks for every whole egg)
- Limit the number of egg yolks when scrambling eggs
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim off any visible fat
- Remove the skin from poultry

ADDING MORE FIBER TO YOUR DIET:

- Eat whole-grain cereals and breads
- Eat vegetables uncooked; if you cook them, steam only until they are just tender
- Avoid peeling fruits and vegetables; when appropriate leave the skins on — the skins are high in fiber
- Add beans to soups and salads
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables or dried fruits (such as raisins or figs)

REDUCING SUGAR IN YOUR DIET:

- Read the label; look for any of the following types of sugar listed as the first or second ingredient (the most abundant ingredient in the product): corn syrup, sucrose, fructose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, lactose, maltodextrin, mannitol, sorbitol, malt syrup, honey molasses, or maple syrup
- Substitute water or unsweetened beverages for sugared soft drinks
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables or dried fruits rather than sugary snacks such as candies, cookies, cakes, and pies

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Food and Drug Administration and Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
Food Information Hotline
888/INFO-FDA or www.fda.gov
- United States Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
www.usda.gov/cnpp/
- American Dietetic Association
Consumer Nutrition Hot Line
800/366-1655 or www.eatright.org

INFORM YOURSELF:

To find this and previous *JAMA* Patient Pages, check out the AMA's Web site at www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm.

Additional Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, American Dietetic Association, *The AMA Complete Guide to Women's Health*

Brian Pace, MA, Writer

Richard M. Glass, MD, Editor

Jeff Molter, Director of Science News

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