

What You Should Eat For Optimum Health

We often wonder what we should eat for optimum health and even the government has recently flip flopped its food pyramid which you can see at MyPyramid.gov.

Here's an overview of the 2005 dietary guidelines from the government.

First off, according to the new government guidelines a healthy diet is one that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk products and will include lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and nuts.

The diet will also be low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars.

The main theme the government is proposing now is to eat a diet rich in grains and to make half of the grains you eat whole grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel -- the bran, germ, and endosperm, some examples would be:

- ? whole-wheat flour
- ? bulgur (cracked wheat)
- ? oatmeal
- ? whole cornmeal
- ? brown rice

Next you should "vary your veggies" and in general buy fresh vegetables in season, stock up on frozen vegetables and buy vegetables that are easy to prepare.

For the best nutritional value, choose vegetables with more potassium such as sweet potatoes and spinach and limit sauces which can add fats, sodium and additional calories.

Prepare more of your foods from fresh ingredients to lower sodium. Most sodium comes from packaged and processed foods.

One suggestion for a healthy diet is to try using a salad as the main dish for lunch and go light on the salad dressing.

Focus on fruits. To help you keep focus, have a bowl of fruit always available on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator. Keep cut fruit in the refrigerator and buy fresh fruits in season whenever possible. Buy frozen, dried, and canned fruits as well so you will always have some kind of fruit on hand.

Choose whole fruits or cut fruits over juices whenever possible for the fiber benefits. Choose fruits high in potassium such as bananas, apricots, and cantaloupe. Put cut fruit on your breakfast cereal. At lunch, take a tangerine, banana, or some grapes. For dinner, add crushed pineapple or mandarin oranges in a tossed salad.

Get calcium rich foods and include low fat or fat free milk as a beverage at meals. Have fat-free yogurt as a snack. Use low-fat cheeses on salads and casseroles.

For those who cannot consume milk products due to lactose intolerance choose lactose free alternatives to get your calcium such as cheese, yogurt, and lactose-free milk.

Go lean with protein. The suggestions for your protein intake are to use the leanest cuts of meats such as top sirloin and pork loin and whenever choosing ground beef go with extra lean that is identified as at least 90% lean.

Buy skinless chicken parts as the fat is in the skin. Choose lean turkey and all kinds of fish.

To keep your meat intake lean and as free of fat as possible, broil, grill, roast, or boil your meat choices instead of frying and drain off any fat that appears during cooking.

Choose dry beans such as kidney beans and use them as the main part of a meal often. Make use of nuts for snacks and use them to sometimes replace meat or poultry.

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About the Author

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