

Do You Eat Healthy Foods?

Many people forget about the nutritional values of foods when planning their meals. After all, it's so much easier to just stop at their favorite fast food restaurant on their way home from work.

Everyone knows they should be eating more healthy foods, but some people aren't quite sure where to start. Here are some things to look for when trying to plan healthier meals.

Are you eating lots of fruits and vegetables? The majority of us do not eat adequate amounts to keep us healthy. Experts recommend that we eat between 5 to 9 servings every day. That adds up to about 2 cups of fruit and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables. Choose a variety of vegetables and fruits in different colors. Dark green vegetables like spinach, for instance, contain more nutrients than lighter colored vegetables.

Are you eating grains and cereals? Besides the well-known benefits of dietary fiber, grains and cereals provide many important nutrients for your health. Whole grain breads and cereals are much preferred over refined white breads or rice.

Are you eating a wide variety of foods? They say that variety is the spice of life. In reality, it's the basis of a healthy diet. Our bodies need food from all of the food groups to function at peak performance. These food groups consist of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats, beans and nuts. Sorry...candy is not a food group.

Do you eat breakfast every day? Yes, it's true: breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating a good breakfast will give you the energy you need to make it through the morning and help eliminate those high-fat splurges.

Do you drink plenty of water? Soda and coffee may be liquid but they do not replace the water that your body needs. We need at least 16 ounces of water each day to keep ourselves hydrated and flush out the impurities that we may have accumulated in our digestive systems.

How much fat do you eat? Dietary fat is our enemy. Even though our bodies need a certain amount of fat, most of us consume 200 to 300 percent more than we need. That's a scary thought! So, when you are making your food choices, look at the labels to see how much fat is contained in the food item. Vegetables and fruits are naturally lower in fat than meats.

How much salt, sugar and alcohol are you eating? Here again, moderation is the key. Serious problems can occur when you overdo. Salt can lead to water retention, weight gain and heart problems. Sugar, when eaten in large quantities over a long period of time can contribute to diabetes. And, excessive alcohol consumption is bad for the kidneys.

Your body will tell you when you are not getting (or when you are getting too much) of a certain kind of food. If you are gaining weight, you know you are either eating portions that are too large or you are eating foods that are high in fat. Feeling tired can mean that you're not getting the nutrients from the foods required by your body to function.

Eating healthy foods is not as difficult as it sounds. In a nutshell: drink more water, eat less fats and sugars, and eat more fruits, vegetables and grains.

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