

Top Ten Tips For a Healthy Diet

Following are tips for consuming a healthy diet to reduce your risk for the most common chronic diseases such as certain types of cancer (e.g. breast, colon, prostate, ovarian, endometrial, and lung (to name a few), heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. When making dietary changes, pick one goal to work on for several weeks before choosing another. Within a couple of weeks, the changes you've made should have become more of a habit thereby making it easier to target another goal to work on. The more of the following recommendations you integrate into your lifestyle, not only will your diet be healthier but your risk for developing the chronic diseases discussed above will be lower. In the event that you already have one of these diseases, making any of the following dietary recommendations will be additional "medicine" for treating your medical condition.

Focus on clean and wholesome food

Choose fresh, seasonal vegetables and fruits, and foods free from preservatives, additives, hormones, antibiotics, and other chemicals. Shop for natural and organic foods (especially strawberries, spinach, lettuce, pears, peaches, green beans, cucumbers, acorn squash).

Make your diet primarily a plant-based diet

The risk for disease is decreased with an intake of 8-10 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Try many colors and kinds; fresh or frozen.

Fruits and vegetables that provide the most nutrients:

- **Vitamin A & carotenoids:** carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, collards, mango, cantaloupe, apricots, tomatoes
- **Vitamin C:** citrus fruits and juices, kiwi fruit, strawberries, cantaloupe, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes, cabbages, romaine lettuce, spinach

- **Folic acid:** beans, peas, peanuts, oranges, OJ, spinach, romaine lettuce, fortified grains and cereals
- **Potassium:** potatoes, milk, tomatoes, bananas, oranges, apricots, prunes, beans Increase consumption of nuts, seeds, and soy products: Edamame, soy milk, soy nuts, tofu, tempeh

Consume 20-35 grams of fiber daily

High fiber foods:

- Breakfast cereals—look for 6 g per serving
 - Uncle Sam 10 g per 1 cup serving
 - Kashi (Good Friends/Go Lean) 8–9 g per serving
 - Muesli 8 g per serving
- Legumes (½ cup) 7–9 g per serving)
- Breads (look for whole grains): goal, 3 g per slice
- Fruits/vegetables (most 2–3 g per ½ cup serving)
 - Apples/pears with skin 3–4 g per serving
 - Raw blackberries 4.4 g per ½ cup serving
 - Broccoli 3 g per ½ cup serving

Choose a variety of whole grains daily

- Whole grains provide many vitamins, minerals, and trace nutrients as well as fiber needed to maintain health and decrease the risk for disease (e.g., folic acid, iron, zinc, magnesium, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, etc.)
- Whole grains aid in bowel regularity and stabilization

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Moderate fat in diet (25-35% of total calories)

- Limit intake of saturated fats: cheese, whole milk, regular ice cream, and red meat. 1,800 kcal diet = goal: 14 g of saturated fat or less/day.
- Limit intake of trans-fatty acids: look on labels for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils; found in hard margarines, commercially fried foods and bakery goods — best to avoid.
- Choose foods with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats: canola and olive oils, nuts, olive, avocados, fatty fish (salmon).
- Very low-fat diets may decrease HDL-C and increase triglyceride levels for some.

Increase intake of omega-3 fatty acids

- Reduces risk for heart disease, and reduces inflammation.
- Sources: fatty fish (salmon, tuna, trout, sardines), -walnuts, pumpkin seeds, soybeans, flaxseeds milled-(2 tbsp/day or flaxseed oil (1 tbsp/day recommended), -eggs from hens specifically fed flaxseed meal.
- Avoid consuming farm-raised salmon more than 2-times per month.

Moderate salt intake

- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- 2,400 mg of sodium recommended per day (=1 tsp of salt).
- Use herbs, spices and fruits to flavor foods.
- When eating out, choose foods that are grilled or roasted.
- Read the nutrition facts labels; foods that are low in sodium contain less than 5% of the daily value for sodium.

Moderate sugar intake

- Consume fresh fruits, natural sugars such as small amounts of natural maple sugar, honey, brown rice syrup or natural sugar.
- A food is likely to be high in sugar if one of the following names appears near the beginning of the ingredient list:
 - Corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses raw sugar, sucrose, syrup, table sugar
 - 1 teaspoon = 4 g of sugar
 - Recommended intake: 6 teaspoons/day (24 g) for 1600 kcal diet; 12 tsp/day (48 g) for 2200 kcals
 - Diets high in sugar may decrease HDL-C levels and increase triglyceride levels.

Choose foods low on the glycemic index

- Avoid processed foods that raise blood sugar levels quickly; blood sugar and energy levels then drop quickly.
- Combining protein, carbohydrate, and fat at meals and snacks can lead to better control of blood glucose levels and promote satiety.
- Choose beans and lentils, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, sweet potatoes, basmati brown rice, apples, pears, cherries, peaches, plums.

Eat Intelligently

- Establish a pattern of eating regularly.
- Be mindful of portion sizes.
- Learn to distinguish between hunger and cravings.
 - Eat at least every 3–4 hours to avoid the build-up of hunger and avoid cravings.
 - Establish a pattern of breakfast, lunch, midafternoon snack and dinner.
 - Eating regularly helps keep blood glucose and energy levels more stable.