

Nutrition 101: Healthy Eating

A healthy diet is a way of eating that controls blood sugar, and decreases risk for complications such as heart disease and stroke.

Healthy eating includes eating a wide variety of foods, including:

- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Non-fat dairy products
- Beans
- Lean meats
- Poultry
- Fish
- Plant-based fats such as oils, nuts, and seeds

There is no one perfect food, so including a variety of different foods and watching portion sizes is key to a healthy diet. Also, make sure your choices from each food group provide the highest quality nutrients you can find. In other words, pick foods rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber over those that are processed.

People with diabetes can eat the same foods the family enjoys. Everyone benefits from healthy eating, so the whole family can take part in healthy eating. It takes some planning but you can fit your favorite foods into your meal plan and still manage your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

The Three Nutrients Explained

1. Carbohydrates are the main source of energy. They are needed for brain and organ function and to fuel physical activity.

- Sources include: fruit and fruit juice, vegetables, grains and beans, milk and yogurt, sugary treats, soda, and sports drinks
- Choose whole grain and whole wheat products, beans (rinsed and drained, if canned), fresh, frozen, or canned fruit in juice or water, fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables (rinsed and drained), and low-fat milk and yogurt



2. **Fat supports the brain and nervous system while providing energy and helping to lower inflammation.**

- Sources include: oils, nuts, nut butters, avocados, seeds, butter, and fat in meat such as beef, pork, bacon, sausage, and chicken skin
- Choose olive or canola oil for dressings and cooking, natural peanut butter, a variety of nuts and seeds, avocados, mayonnaise made with olive oil or light mayo, and light sour cream and cream cheese products



3. **Protein builds and repairs muscle, serves as building blocks for cartilage, skin, hair, and nails, and helps to make enzymes and hormones in the body.**

- Sources include: meat, poultry, fish, eggs, cheese, and soy products
- Choose lean meats such as sirloin or filet, pork tenderloin or lean chops, skinless chicken, at least 90/10% lean ground beef, turkey, or chicken, eggs and/or egg whites (if preferred), fatty fish such as salmon, white fish, shellfish, canned tuna, low fat cheese made with 2% milk, and low fat cottage cheese



Build a Healthy Plate

- **Fill ½ your plate with non-starchy veggies** - carrots, broccoli, green beans, kale, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, greens, summer squash such as zucchini and yellow squash, okra, eggplant, and others
- **Fill ¼ your plate with a lean meat** - skinless chicken and turkey, fish, and lean cuts of pork or beef such as pork tenderloin or beef sirloin
- **Fill ¼ your plate with whole grains or starchy vegetables** – whole grains include brown rice, barley, farro, whole wheat pasta, and quinoa while starchy vegetables include green peas, potatoes, corn, beans, winter squash (acorn or butternut), lima beans, and plantains
- **Choose healthy fats in small amounts** – olive oil or canola oil for cooking and dressings, and small amounts of nuts, seeds, and avocado as toppings for salads and side dishes



Master Your Meal Pattern

- **Maintain a consistent meal pattern** – Regular meals prevent low blood sugar and keep you energized and more focused on tasks at hand throughout the day.
- **Aim to eat every 4-5 hours** – If meals are spaced out by more than 4-5 hours then a snack is needed. When nutritious snacks are skipped, blood sugar can drop too low and increased hunger may cause overeating at the next meal.

Develop Healthy Habits

- **Try starting meals with a salad or raw vegetables and a light yogurt-based dip.** This helps you fill up on more good-for-you veggies before you get to the main course.
- **Make healthy snack foods the quick choice.** Cut up veggies dipped in hummus, fruit and a small amount of nuts or cheese, a half sandwich on whole wheat bread, or low-fat Greek yogurt are all easy snacks that satisfy.
- **Make better choices with eating out.** Ask if meats can be grilled rather than fried, and request sauces and dressings on the side. Remember to choose fruit, salad or other vegetables as side items rather than French fries. Order a salad or soup to start and then share an entrée. Save money — and lots of calories — by skipping dessert.
- **Set aside some time to plan your weekly meals.** You might want to start with just a few days. It may seem like a hassle at first, but having a plan (and writing your grocery list with it in mind) can save you time, stress, and a lot of extra trips to the store.
- **Take your time when you eat.** It takes 20 minutes for your brain send out satiety signals, letting you know that you've had enough. Putting your fork down between bites to have a conversation or take a couple of sips of water, and limiting distractions like phones and television can help to slow down and prevent overeating.
- **Hydrate.** Water is essential for flushing out toxins, carrying nutrients to cells, regulating body temperature, and lubricating joints. It can also help control appetite as some can mistake thirst for appetite. Aim for at least 64 ounces of plain water.
- **Satisfy your sweet tooth.** Enjoy treats in small amounts on special occasions. For the everyday, "I need something sweet after my meal" type of feeling, try a small amount of fruit or square of dark chocolate in place of a cookie, candy, or pastry. Fruit is surprisingly satisfying.

HOMEWORK

My healthy eating smart goal is to:

- **Eat breakfast**
- **Bring lunch to work**
- **Cook more at home**
- **Bring healthy snacks to work**
- **Limit treat foods**
- **Eat more whole grains**
- **Count carbs at meals**
- **Make half your plate non-starchy vegetables**
- **Eat half-portions at restaurants**
- **Order vegetables/salads as sides when eating out**
- **Switch to low-fat dairy**
- **Choose lean meats**
- **Try a new healthy recipe**
- **Switch to low-fat salad dressing and condiments**
- **Make your own salad dressing**
- **Eat more fish**