

Nutrition 101

You Truly Are What You Eat

In the past, the main focus was on the nutrients we might be missing. That's still important. However, scientists now realize that there's a lot more to consider when planning our daily diets. Healthy eating, nutrition and other modifiable lifestyle factors can help you reverse the disease process and improve health.

Armed with the basic nutritional knowledge we've provided here, you and your healthcare provider can work together to develop the dietary and lifestyle prescription that's exactly right for you

What You Eat Affects How You.

Processed foods and other unhealthy dietary habits can interfere with the dietary signals sent to cells throughout the body, which can lead to premature aging and disease. Addressing unhealthy eating patterns allows you to manage symptoms and even halt or reverse the progression of illness. Eating plans can also be customized to specific conditions to maximize healthy signals — to help regulate blood sugar or reduce inflammation, for example.

Eating to Send a Health Message.

Are 3 balanced meals a day enough to keep you healthy? Food is the preferred source of nutrients to supply basic nutrition needs for health maintenance. Knowing how to eat to maximize these nutrients will help you stay on a path to good health.

As you probably know, the foods you eat can be broken down into 3 categories: fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. They're all essential to health — but not every food supplies them in a “good” way. And too much of anything — even a good thing — is still too much. Work with your healthcare provider for suggestions on daily calorie intake and serving size to match your individual needs and activity level.

Fat: Eat The Right Type for Good Health.

Fat is a vital nutrient that your body needs for a wide range of functions, including growth, maintaining skin health, and absorption of nutrients. It's also an important fuel source. Eating the right fats, in moderation, will help you feel full faster and, in turn, reduce your appetite. They can even help lower your risk of heart disease by reducing your levels of total and low-density lipoprotein, or LDL (“bad”) cholesterol.

- **Good:** Mono- and poly-unsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids (from coldwater fish, nuts, and flaxseed oil) are healthy.
- **Bad:** Saturated fat and trans fat (from animal products and processed foods) can be harmful.
- **Disease alert:** Saturated and trans fats can increase your risk of heart disease by increasing your levels of total and LDL cholesterol.

Protein: More than Just Meat.

Protein is a key component of practically every tissue in your body, including muscle, skin and hair. Proteins manufacture the enzymes and hormones that power digestion, metabolism, and tissue growth and repair.

Protein can be found in all meats and vegetables. Some are “complete” proteins (typically from animals) because they contain all the essential amino acids your body needs to build more protein. Others are “incomplete” proteins (such as vegetables and nuts) because they lack one or more essential amino acids.

- **Good:** Lean cuts of meat, white poultry meat, whey protein, soy protein, nuts (in moderation), beans, reduced fat dairy products (or dairy substitutes).
- **Caution:** Even lean protein sources can be prepared in unhealthy ways — battered, deep fried, or covered in fatty sauces or cheeses.
- **Bad:** Fatty cuts of meat, dark poultry meat, excess cheese or “whole” dairy product consumption, poultry skins.

Carbohydrates: The Key to Healthy Eating.

Carbohydrates are important sources of energy and can be found in most foods. Not all carbohydrates are beneficial, so choosing the right carbohydrates is essential.

- **Good:** Better sources of carbohydrates are whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans. These foods are a good source of energy and provide fiber, vitamins, and minerals — as well as phytonutrients that are essential for good health.
- **Caution:** Even the best carbohydrates can be prepared in bad ways. Overcooking can deplete nutrients, or they can be covered in cheese, butter, and fatty/sugary sauces that counteract their benefits.
- **Bad:** Refined carbohydrates or sugars (such as white bread, white rice, pastries and sugary sodas) provide little or no nutritional value.
- **Disease Alert:** Over time, a steady diet of refined carbohydrates can lead to insulin resistance, a harmful condition in which the body can't properly convert blood sugar into energy. Insulin resistance, health conditions.

Fiber and Water: Filling You Up and Cleaning You Out.

Good sources of fiber include bran, beans, brown rice and nuts and green vegetables (such as broccoli, asparagus and spinach). Your healthcare provider may also recommend a fiber supplement. Dietary fiber helps:

- Promote healthy insulin and blood sugar response by slowing digestion, which helps to prevent a surge of blood sugar
- Create a feeling of fullness, helping you control the amount of food you eat.
- Increase bowel motility, helping you empty what your body doesn't need more regularly.

Disease alert: Low fiber diets can increase the risk to insulin resistance, digestive discomfort, and more serious intestinal concerns.

Water helps to transport vital nutrients to, and export waste from, our cells. It's also necessary to moisten the lungs and respiratory tract, lubricate joint surfaces and internal organs, and ensure

proper digestion. Like fiber, water can increase the feeling of fullness and aid in toxin removal. So, it's important to make sure you're getting enough water every day.

Targeted Nutrients: Extra Help for Improved Health.

The growing field of research in nutrigenomics has demonstrated the effects that nutrients and plant substances can have on modifying the expression of genes in favor of good health. This has led to the development of research-based nutraceuticals and medical foods that complement dietary approaches to address today's top health concerns.

Boosting Your Health with Nutritional Supplements.

Even if you eat a nutritious diet, you might benefit from nutritional supplementation. Nutritional supplementation not only helps you maintain adequate nutrient levels, it can also help improve your health or manage chronic health conditions.

Be sure to discuss nutritional supplementation with your healthcare provider, especially if you have a health condition or are currently taking medication.