

CHOOSE A VARIETY OF FOODS

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Getting the nutrients your body needs is essential to living an active, healthy life.

Most foods contain more than just one nutrient or vitamin. Fish, for example, contains protein and healthy fats. Some fish contain calcium. Leafy green vegetables and colorful fruits contain many different vitamins, as well as provide healthy carbohydrate.

So to get the biggest variety of nutrients for your body, eat a variety of different kinds of foods, everyday.

Most adults should strive for five to six ounces of protein from meat, poultry, fish, dry beans or eggs each day. When selecting meat at the market, look for the leanest cuts available. These have the highest levels of protein and the least fat.

Limit your servings of bacon, ham, and processed meats. They also tend to be high in sodium.

Although full of protein, the eggs contain cholesterol and should be limited if you are on a low cholesterol diet. Talk to your health care provider about how many servings of eggs are right for you.

Strive to eat 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables each day. The ones with the most vibrant colors are the most nutritious. If produce is out of season, frozen or canned is a good choice. When choosing canned fruit, though, avoid choosing anything in heavy syrup.

And make sure the vegetables are not creamed or cheesy. These both add unnecessary calories. Choosing the whole fruit or vegetable provides more fiber than drinking its juice.

There are lots of ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into your day. They make convenient snacks, and adding a salad chock-full of dark leafy greens can help satisfy your hunger.

Another goal to eating a variety of foods is to choose carbohydrates carefully. Carbohydrate fuels the body. When choosing carbohydrates – breads, and cereals, rice and pastas – try to avoid refined, bleached white flour. These are high in calories and have little nutritional value.

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Instead, try to make half your grains whole. Whole grain products – brown rice and beans – contain more nutrients, and give you the fiber you need. They help in digestion and are better for your heart. Adults should eat about three servings of whole grain carbs per day.

Fats are another major energy source for the body. You need a certain amount in your diet. However, certain types of fats are better for you than others, so choose your fats wisely.

Avoid the bad fats, the trans and saturated fats. They can raise your cholesterol and increase your chance of heart disease. Instead, look for unsaturated fats which are healthier than trans fats. Vegetable oils, nuts, and fish all contain unsaturated fat.

Now let's look at dairy. Adults should have about three servings of dairy each day. Dairy contains nutrients important to our health. But dairy, such as cheese, yogurts and creams, can be high in fat.

To get the benefits of dairy without the fat, substitute non-fat or low-fat dairy products for whole. If you are lactose intolerant, talk to your healthcare provider about other options.

Eating a variety of foods is easier than you think. Talk to a registered dietitian for more information. You can also use the USDA MyPlate to learn more about reducing calories, nutrition, and tips for healthy choices you can make.

You can find this information online at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.