



A major part of staying healthy is your diet. The choices you make for daily meals affect your health—how you feel today, tomorrow, and in the future. Combined with physical activity, your diet can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight, reduce your risk of chronic illness, and improve your overall health.

Eating a diet that is varied, balanced, and moderate is the easiest way to be sure your body gets all the right foods:



- A **balanced diet** contains the recommended number of servings from each food group on most days. The five food groups are: fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy.
- **Variety** means eating different foods within each food group to ensure you get all the nutrients you need.
- Eating in **moderation** means eating a little of everything but nothing in excess. You can still enjoy your favorite foods but just may need to eat less of them.

Making healthier food choices is easy if you take small steps each week. Small steps in your daily eating habits can make a big difference to your health over the long run. Start slowly and try to add at least one of the following healthy eating goals to your meals each week:

**Keep track of what you eat.** Making a note of the foods you eat for every meal is a good way to begin a new eating plan. Keeping a log on paper or with a food journaling app can help you remember the variety of foods you have eaten over time and how much you consume during the day. The recommended number of daily calories for adult women is about 2,000. For adult men, it is 2,400–3,000.



**Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.** Include orange and dark-green vegetables such as sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, and spinach along with other vegetables to your meals. Make fruit a regular side dish or dessert, too. Use fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables to eat the recommended 1 cup of both each day. They all offer the same great nutrients. Be careful, however, of the sodium (salt) in canned vegetables and choose canned fruits packed in water or 100% juice (not syrup).

**Choose whole grains.** Eat whole wheat bread instead of white bread, and brown rice and whole wheat pasta instead of the white varieties. Read the ingredients and choose products that contain oatmeal, buckwheat, rolled oats, or quinoa.

**Limit calories from sugars and saturated fats.** Less than 10% of your daily calories should come from sugars and syrups that are added to foods and beverages when they are processed or prepared. Less than 10% of your daily diet should also come from foods high in saturated fats. These mostly are found in meat and dairy products, such as butter, whole milk, cheese, beef, and pork. Switch to fat-free or low-fat dairy products and pick leaner ground beef or poultry.

**Drink water.** Many of the calories consumed every day can be found in sugary drinks. Soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks are a huge source of added sugar. Choose water instead and try adding lemon or lime slices or strawberries if you need more flavor.



**Plan ahead.** Healthy choices can be easier if you have snack and meal shortcuts on hand. Buy packaged, ready-to-eat salad mixes and vegetables such as baby carrots, celery sticks, and shredded broccoli. Pre-sliced packaged fruits such as melon and pineapple also make quick snacks and meals. Get started! Once you make the first step towards a better eating, each step after is much easier. Your commitment will increase and so will your new healthier habits!