



BalanceHealth Newsletter

March 2011 | Written by the wellness experts at **eni**



Lead a Nutritious Life

Nutrition is an integral piece of overall health and wellbeing. The foods and beverages that you consume each day affect your current and future health. Developing a healthy eating pattern is important for maintaining a healthy weight and preventing diet-related chronic illnesses.

Your body requires a multitude of essential nutrients including proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins, and water to achieve optimal health. The best way to get the assortment of nutrients that your body needs is to eat a balanced variety of nutrient rich food every day, while staying within your recommended caloric needs.

Attempt to incorporate these foods into your diet each day:

Vegetables – Many essential vitamins and minerals are found in vegetables. Dark green vegetables such as spinach and broccoli along with red and orange vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes are often the most nutrient dense. Beans are also considered to be part of the vegetable family and are not only loaded with vitamins and minerals, but are also packed with cholesterol free protein. There are many varieties of vegetables, which are nutritious both cooked

and raw and can be enjoyed as a main course, a side dish, or even a tasty snack. Adults are encouraged to have 2 ½ cups of vegetables per day.

Fruits – Also rich in vitamins and minerals, fruit is simultaneously nutritious and so very delicious. Eating fruit is a relatively low calorie way to enjoy a sweet treat. While all fruit is good for you, there are some standouts. Berries are considered to be a “superfood” due to their extremely high vitamin levels and they are an excellent source of phytochemicals, which may help block the development of cancer. Tomatoes are another must have in any healthy eating plan. They are high in Vitamin A and C and they contain high levels of lycopene which is an antioxidant that protects cells from oxygen damage, certain cancers, and heart disease. The best thing about tomatoes is that they can be easily incorporated into any diet: raw tomatoes, as well as red sauces, salsa, and even ketchup all count toward your recommended tomato intake. Avocado is another nutritional superstar. It is an excellent source of Vitamins C, E, K, B and folate. Avocados also have

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generous amounts of potassium, which lowers blood pressure and it provides 40% of the fiber you need in a day. Entice and delight your pallet by sampling lots of different fruits. Adults should aim for 2 cups of fruit each day.

Whole Grains – Carbohydrates are essential as they are our body's main source of fuel. Unfortunately, carbs get a bad rap because they can lead to weight gain and other health problems when derived in excess from refined flours, like white rice or bread, and sugars. The key is to get at least half of your grain servings from whole grains such as brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and whole grain breads and cereals. Eating whole instead of refined grains substantially lowers total cholesterol, triglycerides, and insulin levels, leading to a decreased risk for Cardiovascular Disease and Type 2 Diabetes. Whole grains are also rich in fiber, which is important in digestive health.

Lean Meats – A large part of our body is made up of protein, making it an extremely important element in a healthy diet. Protein is essential for repairing and forming new cells, which is how the body grows and maintains itself. Animal meat is rich in complete protein. Choose lean white meats such as skinless chicken and turkey. When eating red meat, select the leanest cuts including sirloin, chuck, loin and round, and make sure that they contain 10% or less fat. Fatty cuts of red meat are high in saturated fat, which can raise cholesterol and lead to cardiovascular problems, so they should be avoided or eaten very sparingly. Fish is another great source of protein. There are many varieties of fish to choose from, but unlike red meat, fatty, oily fish is actually heart healthy because it contains high levels of unsaturated (good) fat and Omega 3 fatty acids. To preserve this healthy protein choice, meat should be prepared grilled, baked, broiled, or sautéed, it should not be breaded or fried.

Low Fat or Fat Free Dairy Products – Milk based foods and beverages supply us with

Calcium and Vitamin D, which are essential for bone health and they are another good source of protein. Adults should include 3 cups of dairy in their diets each day. Milk, cheese, and yogurt are all great choices to fulfill your daily dairy requirements. If you are lactose intolerant and cannot consume milk based products, be sure to still get calcium and Vitamin D from other sources. It might be a good idea to take a supplement and choose foods that are fortified with calcium and Vitamin D, such as some brands of orange juice.

Healthy Fats – Believe it or not, we do need fat in our diets in order for our bodies to function properly. Fat is a concentrated source of energy and it is important for healthy hair, nails, skin, and provides protection and cushion for vital organs. The trick is to avoid saturated fat and instead moderately consume monounsaturated fat, which helps raise levels of protective HDL cholesterol and polyunsaturated fat, which has the ability to help lower total cholesterol. These fats can be found in foods such as olive oil, nuts, avocado, and salmon. Although some fat is necessary, most health professionals recommend that you get no more than 30% of your calories from fat.

Incorporating these foods into your daily routine will put you on the path to lifelong healthy eating. Not only are they nutritious, but by aiming for the daily recommended amount of each, you will enjoy a variety of great foods that will satisfy your hunger and tantalize your taste buds.

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