Healthier Eating

A well-balanced, healthy diet can help you have more energy, and help you lose weight or stay at a healthy weight. Eating well can also reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers. Try these tips for good nutrition:

1. **Enjoy Your Food, But Eat Less**
   - Take the time to fully enjoy your food as you eat it.
   - EAT SLOWLY. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to signal your brain that it’s full. When we eat too quickly, we often overeat.

2. **Focus on Fruits**
   - Fruits have important nutrients. Most fruits are also naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories.
   - Try to include fruit in every meal. Here are a few ideas:
     i) Breakfast: add bananas, mangoes, or strawberries to cereal, or oatmeal, or toast.
     ii) Lunch: add grapes, an orange, or apples to eat with your lunch.
     iii) Dinner: include orange sections, dried cranberries, or pears in a tossed salad.
   - Instead of eating chips and cookies as snacks, try fruits and vegetables, like apples, kiwis, carrots, or green beans.

3. **Add More Vegetables to Your Day**
   - Like fruits, most vegetables are high in nutrients and low in calories and fat.
   - Fresh vegetables should make up about half of your meal. Frozen vegetables are also good.
   - If you’re eating out, ask for a side of vegetables or a salad instead of French fries.

4. **Look for Fat-Free or Low-Fat Dairy Products**
   - Milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk have many good nutrients.
   - Switch to nonfat or low-fat dairy products. They have fewer calories and fat.
   - If you can’t drink milk because you are lactose intolerant or have a lactose allergy, try lactose-free milk, soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, or coconut milk.

5. **Make at Least Half Your Grains Whole**
   - “Grains” means any food made from wheat, rice, corn, or another cereal grain. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits are examples.
   - Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel and are higher in protein and fiber. Eating whole grains as a part of your healthy diet can lower the risk of some chronic diseases.
   - To make sure you are buying whole grain foods, look for products with a whole grain at the start of the ingredient list, like whole wheat, brown rice, oats, bulgur, corn, cornmeal, whole rye, quinoa, and buckwheat.
   - Eat more whole grains by making simple switches.
     i) Try brown rice with a meal instead of white rice.
     ii) Use 100% whole wheat bread or a corn tortilla for your sandwich instead of white bread.

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6. Eat a Variety of Protein

- Protein foods can come from animals as well as plants.
  i) Animal proteins include: meat, poultry, seafood, dairy, and eggs.
  ii) Plant proteins include: beans, peas, soy products, nuts, and seeds.

- We all need protein but most Americans eat more than enough.
  i) The average adult needs 5-7 ounces of protein foods per day.
  ii) One “ounce of protein food” means:
      1) 1 ounce lean meat or seafood
      2) 1 egg
      3) ¼ cup cooked beans or peas
      4) 1 ounce nuts or seeds
      5) 1 Tablespoon peanut butter

- To make your protein intake healthier you can:
  i) Eat lean meat and poultry (don’t eat the skin).
  ii) Replace meat or poultry with fish twice a week.
  iii) Eat more plant proteins like tofu, beans, peas, and nuts.

7. Build a Healthy Meal

- A healthy meal starts with more vegetables and fruits and less protein and grains.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. The more colorful your plate is, the better.
- Have a glass of nonfat or low-fat milk on the side or include low-fat cheese or yogurt.
- Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way: eat fruit for dessert!
- Don’t forget to drink a lot of water.

8. Avoid/Limit Rich Foods and Fried Foods

- Desserts that are high in solid fats and added sugars and salt, such as cake, cookies, ice cream, and candy.
- High fat meats like bacon, ribs, sausages, and hot dogs.
- Sugary drinks like soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks. Drink water instead!
- Instead of frying, try baking, steaming, or roasting food.

9. Go Easy on the Salt

- Too much sodium can raise your risk of high blood pressure, which causes other health problems.
- You can lower the amount of sodium you eat by
  1) Cooking at home more often. By making food yourself you can control how much salt is used.
  2) Checking the nutrition label on your packaged and canned foods for “low sodium,” “reduced sodium,” or “no salt added.”

Source:
“ChooseMyPlate.gov”
US Department of Agriculture, www.choosemyplate.gov

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