

Managing Your Weight: Eating Less Fat and Sugar

If you're trying to lose weight or to maintain your healthy weight, be careful about the fats and sugars in your daily diet. The tips inside this booklet—based on the latest nutrition guidelines from the federal government and from health experts—can help you make better eating choices every day.



Diet and Disease

A Strong Connection

High blood pressure and heart disease are two of the major health problems in America linked to poor eating habits and lack of physical activity. For healthier eating, experts recommend limiting the intake of certain food fats and sugars, as well as salt and alcohol.

Fat: How Much? Which Foods?

Here are the newest government guidelines on dietary fat for most Americans. Consult your doctor on whether they're right for you.

- Get less than 10% of your daily calories from saturated fatty acids
- Eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol per day
- Lower your intake of trans fatty acids as much as possible
- Keep your total fat intake each day to between 20% and 35% of calories

For healthier eating, try to get most of your fat intake from foods that contain polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids. Examples are fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. When you buy and cook meat,

poultry, dry beans, and milk or milk products, choose items that are lean, low in fat, or fat free. Be very sparing with fats and oils that are high in saturated fatty acids and/or trans fatty acids.

You can find out the fat content of packaged foods, along with the content of many other nutrients, by looking at the Nutrition Facts label. There, you'll find the "% Daily Value" (DV) of saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol. A food that has 5% DV or less of these fats is low; 20% DV or more is high.

Sugar, "Sugars," and Carbohydrates

In nutritional terms, "sugar" refers to more than just the table sweetener you might use in coffee. Added sugars (caloric sweeteners) are found in foods and beverages. They have names such as sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, and maple syrup. Because these sugars give you lots of calories with very little nutrients, you should limit them. Read the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods. Be sure that none of these added sugars are

among the first few ingredients listed. Added sugars are called “simple carbohydrates.” While carbohydrates are a part of healthy eating, you should focus on the foods called “complex carbohydrates,” which include vegetables, fruits, and grains. Foods that are high in complex carbohydrates usually have less fat and cholesterol and fewer calories than simple carbohydrates do.

Basic Food Lists

Healthy eating daily for most people means selecting foods from each of five food groups, including fruits, vegetables, dairy products, grains, and protein. These are the current recommendations in each group.

Fruits—A variety of fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits is best. Try to avoid substituting fruit juice. For a 2,000-calorie diet, this would mean 2 cups of fruit—which may include, for example, 1 small banana, 1 large orange, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried apricots—every day.

Vegetables—Focus on dark, leafy greens such as broccoli and kale; orange vegetables such as carrots and winter squash; beans; and peas.

Dairy—To get enough calcium, every day you need 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk, or the equivalent in low-fat yogurt and/or low-fat cheese. If necessary, consume lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and drinks.

Grains—Go for the “whole” thing—3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta daily. Note that 1 ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of cereal, or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked rice or pasta. Look for the word “whole” in ingredients lists for grains such as wheat, rice, oats, and corn.

Protein—Cooking methods matter. Bake, broil, or grill your selections of lean meats and poultry. Remember that protein doesn’t have to mean beef. Eat fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds, too.

Know Your Limits

Be sure to read the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods to be sure you’re not getting too much fat and sugar in your daily diet. Choose foods low in saturated fats and trans fats, and limit your consumption of added sugars and sodium.

Remember

Poor eating habits, along with lack of exercise, are a big factor in high blood pressure, heart disease, and other serious health problems. Talk with your doctor about the eating plan that's right for you—and help yourself to better health.