

Hope & Healing

Healthy Eating 5 Servings of Fruits or Vegetables Daily

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

We have a marvelous list of foods we can choose from daily, but confusion about how much and what to eat has been around for a long time. In 1894, W. O. Atwater of the U.S. Department of Agriculture warned Americans about their habits of eating fatty and sugary foods. He said, "How much harm is done to health by our one-sided and excessive diet none can say. Physicians tell us that it is very great." Today, a century later, we still need to hear his message.

Studies now show that fatty foods create a great many health problems. On the other hand, good-fat, good carbohydrate diets can help prevent 6 of the 10 leading death-causing diseases: heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, atherosclerosis, and chronic liver disease.

The American Diet

The typical American diet is rich in high fat fried foods, an abundance of sweets, and limited amounts of fiber, fruits, and vegetables.

A recent study in the journal *Circulation* (Oct 21, 2008) found that while the typical American diet of fried foods, salty snacks, eggs, and meat led to a 30% increase in heart attacks, a diet high in fruits and vegetables led to a 35% reduction in heart attacks.

The Prudent Diet

While there are many theories on what a healthy diet includes the one proven fact is that a diet high in fruits and vegetables consistently leads to better health.

Multiple research studies confirm that eating 5 servings of fruits or vegetables daily leads to better overall health.

A serving size is:

- One medium-size fruit
- 1/2 cup raw, cooked, frozen or canned fruits (in 100% juice) or vegetables
- 3/4 cup (6 oz.) 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- 1 cup raw, leafy vegetables
- 1/4 cup dried fruit

While this sounds easy enough actually getting this much fruits and vegetables takes some work and planning. You will need to experiment with different types of fruits and vegetables to find ones you and your family can eat every day. Some simple tips include:

- Add fruit to your cereal each morning.
- Eat 1 apple each day routinely. (an apple a day really does keep the doctor away)
- Eat a salad each day for lunch. The typical bowl of salad counts

for 2 servings of vegetables.

- Have some fruits and vegetables at every meal. Use canned or frozen products if needed.
- Eat fruits and vegetables for snacks, especially for the kids.
- Replace the side of fries or chips with a cup of fruit, an apple, or a bowl of celery.
- Replace processed deserts such as cakes and cookies with fruit.

Over the next week try getting 5 servings of fruits or vegetables each day. Soon it will become a routine part of your diet. Once you have mastered this eating habit you can further improve your diet by learning some nutrition basics. Here are some simple tips to get you started.

Nutrition Basics

In order for you to take your health seriously you must have some basic understanding of what you are putting into your body. A simple place to start is by reviewing the basic food groups (carbohydrates, proteins, and fats).

Carbohydrates – otherwise known as “sugars”.

Good Effects – supply energy to the cells of the body.

Bad Effects – causes insulin release which leads to weight gain and diabetes.

Types of Carbohydrates

1) Complex Carbs – Natural carbohydrates found in breads, pasta, rice, cereals, and vegetables.

These tend to cause less insulin release and therefore less weight gain and diabetes. Vegetables are the preferred source for carbs because they also contain fiber.

2) Simple Carbs

Natural - honey, fruits – these cause a large amount of insulin release, but, are better than processed carbs. Fruit also contains fiber which is good.

Processed – Man made sugar which is added to foods – candies, soft drinks, icing, cakes, cookies, pies. These cause extreme insulin release which greatly increases diabetes and weight gain.

3) Fiber - nondigested carbohydrates found in fruits and vegetables. Since they are not digested the body cannot use them for energy. Their good effects come through improving bowel function and by reducing the amount of insulin released when you eat, which decreases diabetes and weight gain. Since fiber is found in large amounts in fruits and vegetables these are the best overall sources of energy.

Proteins – Build and repair the body tissues, supply energy.

These are found in meats (beef, pork, chicken), fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, nuts. Since most of the foods with high protein content have large amounts of fat, a high protein diet usually has a high fat content.

Fats - Fatty Acids

Good Effects - supplies energy to the body, carries vitamins, helps to build cell walls.

Bad Effects - are stored in the body

as fat cells (adipose tissue) which accumulate around the organs. In large amounts they will clog up the blood vessels (clogged arteries).

Types of Fats:

1) Transfat - partially hydrogenated fatty acids - Found in cooking oils used to fry foods (French fries, chicken nuggets, chips, etc.) and in processed foods like commercially baked goods such as cookies, cakes, pies, donuts, fast foods, margarine, vegetable shortening). This type of fat is the most likely to raise the bad cholesterol and lead to heart attacks and strokes.

2) Saturated Fatty Acids - mainly come from animal products (dairy products such as milk and cheese or meats such as beef, pork, or chicken). Raises the bad cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease.

3) Monounsaturated Fatty Acids - Found in olive oil and canola oil used for cooking. May improve cholesterol slightly.

4) Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids - Found in sunflower oil and corn oil used for cooking, and nuts eaten for snacks. May improve cholesterol by lowering the bad cholesterol and raising the good.

5) Fish Oils (Omega 3 Fatty Acids) Found in all fish. Herring, mackerel, salmon, trout, and tuna have the highest amounts. Have good overall health benefits by lowering cholesterol and reducing heart disease risk.

Recommendations:

- Eat carbs that are high in fiber so there is not as great an insulin release. This will decrease the risk of diabetes

and weight gain. - Limit processed carbs - candies, soft drinks, icing, cakes, cookies, pies. Instead eat fruits/vegetables for snacks.

- Increase fiber intake by increasing fruits and vegetables.

- Try to replace protein from meat (especially red meat) with protein from fish, beans, and nuts which have less fat.

- Eliminate Trans Fats - NO fried foods or commercially processed baked goods (cookies, cakes, chips, donuts, pies)

- Limit Saturated Fats - Limit red meat to once a week. Limit cheese and use only skim milk.

- Monounsaturated/Polyunsaturated Fats are ok in moderation. Use olive and canola oil for cooking. Eat nuts for snacks.

- Increase Fish Oils (Omega 3 Fatty Acids). Eat fish as much as possible (not fried).