

EHL: The Essentials of Healthy LivingSM

Essential Components of a Healthy Diet

Is your body getting the right balance of nutrients? If you experience any one of these symptoms, start rethinking your diet: heartburn, constipation, thinning hair, skin conditions, foot or body odor, bad breath, fatigue, weight gain, PMS, or depression. Each has associations with imbalanced nutrition. Eating foods that are full of nutrients helps protect your body from illness and other imbalances. Advance meal planning enables healthier eating habits. For general guidance, consult a 4 Seasons Certified Personal Trainer, or for more extensive meal planning, contact a local nutritionist.

A Well-Balanced Diet Includes:

- 1. A variety of nutrient rich carbohydrates, high-quality protein, and healthy fats.
- 2. Appropriate portion sizes. Remember your stomach is roughly the size of your fist when empty!
- 3. Regular meals. If eating three main meals a day does not work for you, try six smaller ones.
- 4. Limited amounts of processed foods, and foods high in sugar or salt.
- 5. Taking the time to enjoy and savor your food.

Plan your meals based around these nutrition guidelines:

CARBOHYDRATES (40-60% of daily calories)

Healthy sources of carbohydrates include vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains. Complex carbohydrates provide fiber which is critical to the efficiency of numerous body processes. Limit simple carbohydrates (white sugar and white flour, soda-pop, desserts, candy, etc.). These provide little or no value and contribute to insulin resistance, obesity, hormone imbalances, and chronic inflammation issues.

PROTEIN (20-30% of daily calories)

Preference is given to complete proteins that include all of the essential amino acids (organic, free-range, or wild animal sources such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and yogurt over commercial or processed meats and farm-raised fish). Incomplete proteins come from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Vegetarians must pay attention to food choices to include all the essential amino acids.

FAT (20-30% of daily calories)

Healthy fats (omega-3 essential fatty acids and omega-6 essential fatty acids) are vital to health and are not made by the body. They fight inflammation, stimulate the immune system, enhance mood, and support joint health, as well as cardiovascular, brain, and nervous system functions. You must get these good fats from your diet (wild cold-water fish, walnuts, flaxseed, etc.) or an essential fatty acid (EFA) supplement. Avoid or at least limit your consumption of unhealthy fats such as hydrogenated oils found in many manufactured or processed foods.

The information in this reference document is not intended to be a substitute for advice or treatment from a qualified physician, nor is it intended to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Consult your physician prior to starting any new health program or if you have any questions regarding a medical condition.

NUTRITION QUIZ

Email your ricki enfulton@gmail.com to find the answers!

1. Which vegetable has the highest amount of vitamin A?
2. Which vegetable boasts more than 35 essential vitamins and minerals?
3. What is considered the most nutritious vegetable?
4. Which carbohydrates keep insulin levels low?
5. Which food has a lot of flavor in small quantities and helps speed up the heart rate and boost the metabolism?
6. True or False. Just eating one spicy meal a day speeds up the metabolism by 25% for up to 3 hours.
7. True or False. A calorie is a calorie, and your body burns all calories the same way.

Lots of foods are good for you. But the best and most healthy are those that are low in calories, high in nutrients, and have been shown to help prevent the effects of aging, including cardiovascular disease, [diabetes](#), [high blood pressure](#) and some cancers.

Many different lists exist of nutritious foods, or "superfoods," (See Resources section below) but many of the same foods show up on each of the lists. Not surprisingly, most of the best foods come from the category of [vegetables](#)--though some fruits and grains rank high, too.

Beans

Beans have a low glycemic index, which means they keep you feeling full for a long time and don't radically affect your body's blood sugar levels and insulin response.

They are a good source of protein, plus they include B vitamins such as folate and minerals such as iron. What they do not contain is sodium, cholesterol and saturated fat, which makes them a healthier choice than meat. Canned varieties do contain sodium, but you can reduce levels dramatically by rinsing the beans with water before eating them.

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Eggs

Eggs are a complete source of protein, which means they contain a complete count of the essential amino acids. The white of the egg provides more than half of the protein; the yolk supplies the rest of the protein, the fat and most of the calories. Eat eggs in moderation, and substitute two egg whites for each whole egg to reduce fat, calories and cholesterol.

Yogurt

Yogurt is high in protein and minerals including calcium. It also contains friendly bacteria known as probiotics, which helps you maintain healthy levels of good bacteria in your gastrointestinal tract. The Greek varieties of yogurt are generally thicker than most other yogurts. They are also usually lower in sugar and higher in protein.

Nuts

Nuts contain fat, and they can be high in calories. But, eaten in moderation, they provide nutrition that may be difficult to get elsewhere. Walnuts contain melatonin, which helps regulate your sleep/wake cycles. Peanuts are packed with protein. Almonds have strong antioxidant properties and high levels of vitamin E, which prevent the oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

Berries

Berries--strawberries, blueberries, cranberries, cherries--are a big source of phytochemicals, compounds found in plants that can improve your health and decrease your risk for certain diseases. They also contain fiber, which can help lower cholesterol levels.

Dr. Nicholas Perricone, who frequently appears on Oprah, lists acai as his favorite superfood. It is a berry from a palm tree in the Amazon, which has a slight chocolate taste. He ranks it so high because it is full of antioxidants, amino acids and essential fatty acids.

Whole Grains

Each whole grain offers unique benefits, but whole grains in general contain protein and are good sources of the minerals, iron, phosphorus, magnesium and zinc.

Phytochemicals in buckwheat may play a role in managing blood cholesterol levels, and they seem to be able to reduce high blood pressure when consumed regularly. Buckwheat also has been shown to have a favorable effect on blood glucose levels in people with type 2 diabetes,

Barley is a good source of fiber and selenium, which is important for antioxidation--and the prevention of cellular damage.

Quinoa contains more protein than most grains, and it has high amounts of calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, copper, zinc and iron.

Broccoli

Broccoli makes many lists of most nutritious foods because it's high in vitamins A and C and because the phytochemicals it contains (isothiocyanates, indoles and bioflavonoids) may help prevent cancer.

Sweet potato

Sweet potatoes are a good source of fiber, and of beta carotene, which keeps your eyes healthy and vision strong. It helps prevent age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of preventable

blindness. Beware, however, that the canned and frozen sweet potatoes are less nutritious than fresh varieties.

Hot peppers

Capsaicin is the substance in peppers that gives them their fire. It is also the reason peppers make their way onto superfoods lists. Capsaicin stimulates the mucus membranes in your nose and respiratory tract, which stimulates drainage and clears out congestion. It also acts as an anti-inflammatory.

Salmon

Salmon is rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, which have been shown to lower cholesterol levels. They also hamper the creation of blood clots and slow the growth of plaque that builds up and narrows the heart's arteries.

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