

Healthy Nutrition

Eating a healthy diet is one of the most important things you can do for your body. A balanced diet can help you maintain a healthy weight, avoid disease, and feel more energetic. The following information will help you understand the basics of a healthy diet. It will also give you some ways to make better nutrition a part of your everyday life.

Healthy eating basics

Healthy eating involves both choosing healthy foods and eating them in amounts that are right for you. Even if you eat a balanced diet, you may develop a weight problem if you eat too much—that is, if the foods you eat contain more calories than your body needs. Here are two ways to avoid overdoing it:

Familiarize yourself with how many calories you need each day. The number you need depends on factors such as age, gender, height, activity level, and overall health. Find out more at [Canada's Food Guide](#) web page.

Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Fresh fruits and vegetables generally have fewer calories per ounce than other foods. Eating more of them can help you limit calories without counting calories rigidly.

One easy way to do this is to fill half of your plate at each meal with fruits and vegetables and the other half with grains, preferably whole grains, and lean protein. Visit [Half Your Plate](#) to see how your plate might look and to learn about foods in each category.

Guidelines for healthy eating all through life

Here are some guidelines about what to eat:

Avoid saturated fats and trans fats. Everyone needs to eat fats to get the energy and essential vitamins and nutrients. But it's important to choose fats sensibly. Saturated fats can cause a build-up of blood cholesterol, which can lead to heart disease, and should be eaten sparingly.

Saturated fats are typically solid at room temperature and found in many high-fat dairy products, like cheese, whole milk, cream, butter, and ice cream. Saturated fat in and from food is a part of a healthy diet. Saturated fat in and from food is a part of a healthy diet.

Eat unsaturated fats. Foods with unsaturated fats do not t t

Get to know what a serving size **really** is and limit yourself to that amount of food. Many things sold in an individual package—a can of soda or a 12-ounce steak—actually provide two or more servings.

When you're eating at a restaurant, consider ordering a half portion, sharing your meal, or asking to have some of it wrapped up to take home.

Eat more whole-grain foods. Whole grains (oatmeal, whole wheat, brown rice, whole oats, whole rye) have more vitamins, minerals, fibre, and other nutrients than refined grains, like those found in white rice or pasta.

Drink water instead of soda or juice. Water has zero calories and doesn't contain sugar, both of which are in soda and juice.

Aim for a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. Eat raw vegetables or fruits, like carrots or an apple, for a snack or eat fruit for dessert.

Eat breakfast. Eating breakfast can help you control hunger throughout the day. Try oatmeal and a piece of fruit or some yogurt with berries.

Switch to low-fat versions of some foods. Use low-fat cheese, sour cream, cottage cheese, yogurt, and zero-trans-fat margarine instead of the high-fat versions. Try low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt for dessert.

Reduce the amount of salad dressing, mayonnaise, butter, and other high-fat condiments you use. Try the low-fat versions of these foods or substitute other things, such as fresh lemon juice or vinegar and spices on a salad, mustard on a sandwich, or salsa on a baked potato.

Choose the leanest cuts of meat you can find. Buy lean ground beef, skinless chicken, and other lower-fat cuts. Trim all visible fat from meats.

Avoid fried foods. Fried foods are high in saturated and trans fats. Substitute a baked potato for French fries; get broiled or grilled fish or chicken instead of fried.

Eat healthy snacks. Instead of chips or candy, snack on fruit, pretzels, whole-grain crackers, or vegetables.

Be careful with low-fat or reduced-fat foods. Just because something is labelled "low fat" doesn't mean it doesn't have any calories. Check portion sizes and eat everything in moderation.

Eating a healthy diet doesn't mean sacrificing your favourite foods or severely limiting the amount of food you eat. Instead, building a healthy diet is about choosing the best foods for your body—foods with the nutrients your body needs to be at its best.

Resources

[Canada's Food Guide - Health Canada](#)

[Dietitians of Canada](#)

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