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MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES ABOUT NUTRITION

Good nutrition is one of the keys to good health. You can improve your nutrition—and your health—by regularly eating foods that have a lot of vitamins and minerals in them, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low- or non-fat dairy. Your family or other primary care doctor can give you advice about nutrition and help you stay healthy.

DO I NEED TO CHANGE WHAT I EAT?

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you may need to talk about improving your nutrition with your doctor:

-  **Has** your doctor talked with you about a medical problem or a risk factor, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol?
-  **Did** your doctor tell you that this condition could be improved by better nutrition?
-  **Do** diabetes, cancer, heart disease or osteoporosis run in your family?
-  **Are** you overweight?
-  **Do** you have questions about what kinds of foods you should eat or whether you should take vitamins?
-  **Do** you think that you would benefit from seeing a registered dietitian, a member of the health care team who specializes in nutrition counseling?

WHAT KIND OF DIET SHOULD I FOLLOW?

You should follow a healthy diet that you like and that you can stick to. The diet should be low in fats (especially saturated and trans fats) and sugars, and high in fiber and protein. Your doctor can give you advice on what kinds of foods are healthy choices. Ask for help from your family doctor especially if you have a medical problem that requires a special diet.

CAN I TRUST NUTRITION INFORMATION I GET FROM THE INTERNET, NEWSPAPERS, OR MAGAZINES?

Nutrition tips and diet information from different sources often conflict with each other. You should always check with your doctor first. Also, keep in mind the following advice: There is no "magic bullet" when it comes to nutrition. There isn't one single diet that works for every person. You need to find an eating plan that works for you. Fad diets offer short-term changes, but good health comes from long-term effort and commitment.

CAN MY FAMILY DOCTOR HELP ME MANAGE MY WEIGHT?

If you are concerned about your body's size or think you need to lose weight, talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian, who may reassure you that you are at a healthy weight. Or if you are overweight, he or she can sit down with you and determine the best way for you to reach a healthy weight.

WILL IT BE HARD TO CHANGE MY EATING HABITS?

Probably, but even very small changes can improve your health considerably. The key is to keep choosing healthy foods and stay in touch with your doctor and dietitian, so they know how you are doing.

HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE TIPS

Instead of this:

Try this:

Grains

Sugar cereals and regular granola	Oatmeal, low-fat granola and whole-grain cereal
Potato or corn chips and buttered popcorn	Pretzels (unsalted) and popcorn (unbuttered)
White pasta	Whole-wheat pasta
White rice	Brown rice
All-purpose white flour	100% whole-wheat flour

Fruits & Vegetables

Fried vegetables or vegetables served with cream, cheese or butter sauces	All vegetables raw, steamed, broiled, baked or tossed with a very small amount of olive oil and salt and pepper
Coconut	Fruit (fresh)
French fries, hash browns and potato chips	Baked white or sweet potatoes

Meat, Poultry and Fish

Regular or breaded fish sticks or cakes, fish canned in oil, seafood prepared with butter or served in high-fat sauce	Fish (fresh, frozen, canned in water), low-fat fish sticks or cakes and shellfish (such as shrimp)
Pork spare ribs and bacon	Lean pork (tenderloin and loin chop) and turkey bacon
Regular ground beef	Lean or extra-lean ground beef, ground chicken and turkey breast
Lunch meats such as pepperoni, salami, bologna and liverwurst	Lean lunch meats such as turkey, chicken and ham

Dairy

Whole or 2% milk	Non-fat or 1% milk
Yogurt made with whole milk	Nonfat or low-fat yogurt
Regular cheese (e.g. American, blue, Brie, cheddar, Colby and Parmesan)	Low-fat cheese with less than 3 grams of fat per serving (e.g. natural cheese, processed cheese and nondairy cheese such as soy cheese)
Regular ice cream	Sorbet, sherbet and nonfat or low-fat ice cream (no more than 3 grams of fat per 1/2 cup serving)

Fats, Oils & Sweets

Cookies	Fig bars, gingersnaps and molasses cookies
Shortening, butter or margarine	Olive, soybean and canola oils
Regular mayonnaise	Nonfat or light mayonnaise
Regular salad dressing	Nonfat or light salad dressing
Using fat (including butter) to grease pan	Nonstick cooking spray

REFERENCES

All information sourced from FamilyDoctor.org, a resource operated by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)