

FACT SHEET

A Guide to Healthy Eating

This *WorkCare Fact Sheet* provides general guidelines for healthy eating. If you have a medical condition, ask your personal health care provider for dietary recommendations.

Good nutrition is essential to your health.



Experts recommend eating a balanced diet to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke,

diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, iron deficiency and even tooth cavities.

Nutrition Basics

Dietary Fat

Dietary fat is a nutrient that helps your body absorb essential vitamins, maintain the structure and function of cell membranes, and keep your immune system working.

While any type of fat is high in calories, trans fats, saturated fats and cholesterol are types of unwanted fats that may increase your risk of weight gain, heart disease and other health problems.

Unsaturated fats such as polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats are healthier for you and can be found in lean poultry, fish and olive, canola and nut oils. Unsaturated fats should be used whenever possible. Adults are advised to keep dietary fat to 20-35 percent of total daily caloric intake.

Trans fat acid (trans fat) can be found either naturally from the fatty parts of meat and

dairy products or artificially in foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils, which are often used in food products to extend shelf life. Too much trans fat in your system can increase “bad” cholesterol and put you at risk for coronary heart disease, the leading cause of death in America. It is recommended to limit trans fats to no more than 1 percent of total daily calories.

Saturated fats are solid fats and are most often found in animal products such as high-fat cuts of meat, cheeses, whole-fat milk and cream, butter and other dairy products. It is recommended to keep your intake of saturated fats under 10 percent of daily calories. Reducing just a small amount of saturated fat can help lower your risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is also found in animal-based foods such as meats, poultry, egg yolks and whole milk. It is recommended that individuals consume less than 300 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol each day. Because both saturated fats and cholesterol are found in animal-based foods, reducing your saturated fat intake can also lower your cholesterol intake.

Polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats are “good” sources of fat that can be found in unsalted nuts and seeds, vegetable oils and lean poultry. Other unsaturated fats include:

- Sunflower, soybean and corn oils
- Monounsaturated fat sources Omega-6
- Polyunsaturated fat sources Omega-3
- Avocado
- Flaxseed
- Certain types of fish including trout, herring and salmon

Recommendations

- Choose products without trans fat
- Drink low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk rather than whole or 2% milk
- Avoid foods containing hydrogenated oil
- Avoid synthetic sources of fat such as snacks, cookies, cakes and doughnuts
- Replace items such as margarine and shortening with monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats such as canola, olive, soybean, corn and sunflower oil
- Choose leaner cuts of meat and trim all visible fat
- Remove skin from chicken, turkey and other poultry before cooking

Carbohydrates

Your body needs carbohydrates to make glucose, which in turn is converted to energy. An excess of carbohydrates in your diet can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.

There are two basic types of carbohydrates. Healthy carbohydrates are rich in fiber and can be found in vegetables, fruits, beans, legumes and whole grains. Unhealthy carbohydrates are found in foods made of white flour or containing added sugars. Examples include soft drinks, desserts and refined grain products such as white bread.

It is recommended to get 45 to 65 percent of daily calories from carbohydrates and at least half of your daily grain consumption from whole grains. Whole grains are a good source of fiber and nutrients. Examples of whole grains include brown rice, wild rice, whole-grain barley, whole-grain corn, oatmeal, whole rye and whole wheat.

Dietary Fiber

Dietary fiber can improve your cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Fiber can be found in the following foods: oats, dried beans, peas, fruits, vegetables, unsalted nuts and seeds, wheat bran and other whole grains. Women are advised to get about 22 to 28 grams of fiber a day; men about 28 to 34 grams. In general, it is recommended that adults get 14 grams of dietary fiber for every 1,000 calories consumed.

Protein



Protein is an important source of calories and energy. However, too much protein can lead to excess caloric intake

and weight gain. It is recommended that 10 to 35 percent of your daily calories come from protein. You can find protein in the following foods:

- Meats, poultry, fish and dairy products (for lower-fat protein choose lean or low fat)
- Legumes, dry beans and peas
- Tofu
- Eggs (for lower-fat protein choose egg whites or pasteurized egg white products)
- Nuts and seeds
- Grains, some vegetables and some fruits provide a smaller amount of protein

Sodium

Sodium intake should be kept under 2,300 milligrams a day. Too much sodium can increase your blood pressure and increase risk for a heart attack or stroke. Too little sodium can affect the balance of fluids in your body that help transmit nerve impulses and

influence the contraction and relaxation of muscles. You can monitor sodium intake when cooking at home and by avoiding processed foods that are high in salt.

Sugar

Natural sugars come from fruits, vegetables, milk and some grains. Processed sugars add unwanted calories to your diet. It is recommended that you keep sugar intake to 5 to 15 percent of total calories per day. In general, most women should consume no more than 100 calories a day from added sugar and most men no more than 150 calories a day.

Water



Getting the right amount of water every day is essential for your body to stay hydrated and function properly. Water helps maintain a normal body temperature, lubricates

and cushions joints, and protects the spinal cord and other sensitive tissues. It's important to drink more water when in hot climates, participating in physical activity, running a temperature, or when you have diarrhea or vomiting. Avoid sugar-sweetened sodas; drink 100 percent fruit juice instead of artificial fruit juices.

Meal Planning Resources

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture:
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
2. DASH Eating Plan:
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/
3. Nutrition information:
www.nutrition.gov

Dietary guidelines call for less sugar, red and processed meat

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services jointly revise dietary guidelines every five years.

As part of the revision process, the *Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee* features the latest scientific evidence on diet, nutrition and health. It defines a healthy diet as higher in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low- or non-fat dairy, seafood, legumes and nuts; moderate in alcohol; lower in red and processed meat; and low in sugar-sweetened foods and drinks and refined grains.

Additional findings:

- **Daily intake:** Goals for the general population per day are less than 2,300 mg dietary sodium (or age-appropriate Dietary Reference Intake amount), less than 10 percent of total calories from saturated fat, and a maximum of 10 percent of total calories from added sugars.
- **Behavior change:** In addition to exercise, the committee suggests a number of personal behavior-change strategies including reduced screen time; fewer meals from fast-food restaurants; increasing the frequency of family-shared meals; and self-monitoring diet, body weight and food labeling.

The 2010 guidelines emphasize balancing calories with physical activity and avoiding refined grains and foods containing sodium, sugar additives, and saturated and trans fats.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* (<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietary-guidelines-2010>) are the 7th edition released since 1980 and will remain in effect until *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015* are released in the fall. Refer to <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/>