Ten easy tips for a healthier daily diet

Healthy eating can be a challenge when faced with the barrage of activities and stresses that make up a busy life. Having a little extra nutritional knowledge can help. By keeping these basic principles in mind when choosing your meals and snacks, you'll be following a road map to better health:



Variety is the spice of life. Aim to include foods from the four food groups—grains, fruits and vegetables, milk, meat and alternatives—in your diet every day.

Pay attention to portion sizes. Start with a small serving; you can take more if you're still hungry when it's gone. One trick for easier portion control is to chew your food well—this helps you enjoy all the flavour your meal has to offer, and helps you tune into your body and know when you're full.

3. **All things, in moderation.** Depriving ourselves of the things we like most isn't necessary—and rarely works. Instead of taking an attitude of denial: "I will NOT eat chocolate, (or sweets or chips or whatever your vice may be)," acknowledge that these foods are ones you really enjoy and can have as an occasional treat. A chocolate bar or a small bag of chips at the end of a long week of good eating is an appropriate reward as long as you're not "treating" yourself every day.
4. **Include foods with fibre.** Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are not only delicious, they're high in the fibre your body needs to function well and keep regular.
5. **Go for the good fats.** Alternative sources of fat such as olive oil, sunflower oil or avocado are just as satisfying, yet better for you than more processed sources of fat like margarine or foods containing poly unsaturated fats like palm oil. The quality of the fats in your diet is as important as the quantity. In terms of animal fat, look for high quality or organic butter and meats, and consume them in moderation.
6. **Keep hydrated.** Our bodies need water to function well. When you get the first feelings of hunger for a snack or a meal, reach for a glass of water or juice to tide you over as you prepare some food. Know that drinks like coffee and pop with aspartame are dehydrating and leave your body thirsty for the simpler stuff. Try to get as close as you can to eight glasses of water, juice and herbal tea a day.
7. **Vary your protein sources.** Plant proteins such as beans, lentils, split peas and grains are surprisingly high in available protein, and in much-needed fibre. If you eat a lot of meat, try replacing at least one meat dish per week with a thick lentil stew, hearty bean burrito or other legume-based dish. Eating foods from lower down on the food chain is easier on the environment, too.
8. **Curb your sweet tooth.** For sugar cravings, try to stave them off with water, pure fruit juice (not "punch" or "drink," which are sweetened with sugar), or fruit for snacks and dessert. Even sweet vegetables like parsnips and squash can help satisfy your sweet tooth. Soda pop and sugary sweets not only rot your teeth, but over time they're hard on your bones and your metabolism.
9. **Exercise daily.** Walking is a safe, inexpensive way to burn calories. Instead of worrying about not making it to the gym, make activity a part of your day-to-day life. Park your car at the far end of the parking lot or take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.
10. **Talk to a professional.** Connect with a registered dietician to develop a personalized meal plan to meet your nutritional and weight loss/management goals. These basic strategies can help take the guesswork out of healthy living and eating. Using them as a framework when making food choices will help you ensure a healthier daily diet.

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