



Healthy Eating - A Woman's Guide



Nutrition has a major impact on your health. As a woman, you are at unique risk for nutrition related health problems like heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, anemia and being overweight. Don't forget that before and during pregnancy, good nutrition is essential for you and your growing baby. Making healthy food choices is important for women of all ages.

The most important choice you can make to influence your long-term health is what you eat!

What nutrition strategies can I use to help prevent health problems?

1) Eat for Healthy Weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is key to preventing heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. It also contributes to a healthy pregnancy.

Adjust your food choices and activity to maintain a healthy weight. Although this may seem challenging, a few changes each day will add up to make a difference. Here are some ways to minimize weight gain:

- Include whole grain breads, pastas and rice to keep you feeling full longer
- Eat more vegetables and fruit (aim for 7-8 servings a day).
- Choose lower fat milk and alternatives such as skim or 1% milk.
- Enjoy leaner meats, skinless chicken, fish and legumes more often.
- Limit fried foods.
- Limit added fats like butter, hard margarine, lard, and shortening.
- Eat smaller portions of dessert and snack foods.
- Eat regular small meals over the day and don't skip meals.
- Find activities you enjoy and participate in one for 30-60 minutes every day.
- Drink plenty of water.

2) Choose Your Fats Wisely

The type of fat you get in foods affects your health. Choose foods containing unsaturated fats, omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids to protect against heart disease. Eat fewer foods with saturated fat and hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce your risk of heart disease. Here's how you can make it happen.

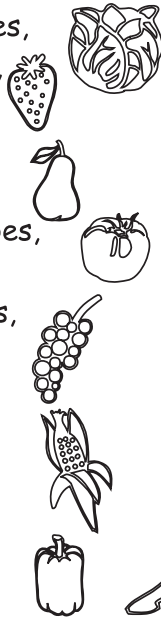
- Use unsaturated vegetable oils such as olive, canola, and soybean oils in salad dressings and stir-fries.
- Include more "fatty fish" such as salmon, trout, tuna, mackerel, herring and sardines for more omega-3 fatty acids.
- Add a tablespoon or two of nuts, seeds, or ground flaxseed to cereals, salads and stir-fries to increase your omega-3 fatty acid.
- Choose a soft margarine for cooking or as a spread and use sparingly.
- Choose lower fat dairy products, such as skim or 1% milk, cheese containing 20% milk fat or less, fat free yogurt and light ice cream.
- Reduce your intake of processed foods like store-bought cookies, cakes and pastries. These are usually made with hydrogenated oils or saturated fats.

3) Go for Vegetables and Fruit!

Include at least 7-8 servings of vegetables and fruit a day. A diet rich in these foods can protect you against cancer, control your weight, decrease your risk of heart disease and increase your vitamin intake. The antioxidants and phytochemicals in vegetables and fruit are not available in vitamin pills.

Add colour to your plate. Imagine the possibilities:

- Red - beets, cabbages, tomatoes, grapes, grapefruits, raspberries, strawberries, watermelons
- White - cauliflower, onions, parsnips, potatoes, apples, pears
- Orange - carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, mangos, oranges
- Blue and Purple - eggplants, blueberries, grapes
- Yellow - corn, summer squash, turnips, waxbeans, yellow peppers, bananas
- Green - bok choy, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, green beans, green peppers, lettuce, peas, spinach, Swiss chard, avocados, kiwi fruit



4) Boost Your Nutrient Stores

Increase your intake of calcium, vitamin D, iron and folate for protection against osteoporosis and anemia and to set the stage for a healthy pregnancy.

- For calcium and vitamin D choose 2 servings of low fat milk or fortified soy beverages per day. Other sources of calcium are cheese, yogurt, salmon with the bones, and calcium enriched orange juice.
- Iron from meat, fish and poultry is well absorbed by the body. To help increase iron absorption from breakfast cereals, enriched pasta, spinach, broccoli, dried fruit, legumes, nuts and seeds try to include a source of vitamin C at each meal.
- Excellent sources of folate include cooked beans and lentils, green vegetables like romaine lettuce, asparagus and spinach, and citrus fruit, especially orange juice and pineapple juice. Good sources of folate are broccoli, oranges, honeydew melon, beets, peas, roasted peanuts and wheat germ.



Are there any foods that I should limit?

While all foods can fit into a healthy diet, foods that contribute calories but few nutrients should be consumed in moderation. These include caffeine containing beverages, alcohol, fried foods, sweet foods like jam and candy and salty foods like chips. By enjoying these on an occasional basis, you will help to control your weight. Limit foods high in saturated fats such as coffee cream, butter, gravy, and rich desserts. These fats will tend to increase your blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease.

Where can I get information for healthy eating?

For consistent, easy to understand advice, use Canada's Food Guide. This is a guide to selecting foods with adequate nutrition, lower fat and higher fibre content, and colourful vegetables and fruit. Follow the serving size suggestions for maintaining a healthy weight. Good nutrition can allow you to have a healthy productive life at every stage and every age.