

Personal Health

Making Nutrition Work For You

The very first vitamin was discovered in 1897. Since then we have learned a lot about nutrition but there is much more waiting to be discovered. Nutrition is still considered a relatively young science. However, we do know that what we decide to fuel our bodies with can have a profound impact on how much energy we have, how well we can fend off illness and how we feel from day to day.

No doubt you have been confused on at least one occasion by the seemingly conflicting nutrition advice out there. You may even be downright tired of getting mixed messages about how you should eat. Often we hear of the latest nutrition news hot off the press, however nutrition findings have to stand the test of time before they are considered confirmed. Registered Dietitians can help you make sense of all the nutrition information available and translate the scientific evidence into practical guidelines that accommodate your preferences and lifestyle.

Common Barriers to Eating Well. Consumer interest in nutrition is soaring and many believe that nutrition is an important part of their lives. Despite these facts, nutrition can be overlooked when day-to-day activities take precedence. Lack of time, knowledge, support and lack of energy all contribute to poor diets. You may be struggling with some of these common barriers to good nutrition.

- your busy schedule interferes with your attempts at healthy eating
- you skip meals only to overeat at night
- you want to eat well but can't seem to muster up enough energy to do so
- when you really feel like something healthy there's nothing in the refrigerator
- you turn to food when feeling stressed, bored or tired
- you fluctuate between periods of sensible, nutritious eating and unhealthy eating
- you don't feel confident in choosing a healthy diet
- you lack the time to research nutrition yourself

Eating Well Helps You Get the Most Out of Life. Fueling your body with healthy food is well worth the investment. Which of these rewards are important to you?

- increased energy level
- successful weight management
- increased mental energy
- improved physical performance
- stronger immune system
- increased ability to handle stress

- decreased risk of heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, high blood pressure and diabetes

Basic Principles of a Healthy Diet

1. Breakfast

Breakfast gets your body and mind revved up and ready to go. Breakfast eaters tend to be more successful at weight management, have less food cravings, eat less at night and have higher intakes of certain vitamins and minerals. So take 10 minutes to start your day with a bowl of cereal and fruit, a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of milk or a bagel with low fat cheese and a glass of juice.

2. Regular eating

Skipping meals during the day is setting yourself up to overeat at night. Fueling yourself regularly, every 4-6 hours, helps to keep your energy level high and prevents overeating later in the day. For most people this means eating three meals per day and possibly one or two snacks.

3. Low fat, high carbohydrate selections

Some fat is essential for good health but overdoing it can increase your risk for weight gain, heart disease and certain cancers. High fat diets can also make you feel tired and sluggish. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends reaching for plenty of whole grain cereals, breads and other grain products, fruits and vegetables, choosing lower fat milk products more often and leaner meats, poultry and fish. Include some low fat protein selections like chickpeas, kidney beans and lentils.

Invest in a low fat cookbook for tasty and interesting meals.

4. Hydration

Water is involved in almost every process in your body so it makes sense that if you're not getting enough; your body will not function at its potential. Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of dehydration. So just by drinking enough water, you can boost your energy level. Aim for 6-8 cups a day of water or other hydrating fluids like juice and milk.

5. Five a day!

That's the magic number of servings of fruits and vegetables you are recommended to eat daily. If you eat more than this - even better. Fruits and vegetables help to stave off heart disease, cancer and have also been linked to helping control high blood pressure. Load up that shopping cart with fresh produce and have canned and frozen fruits and vegetables on hand for easy access. Grab a fruit to take to work or have it stocked at the office for a quick snack during the day.

6. Variety

If your diet lacks variety it may also lack certain nutrients. By eating different foods you gain the special benefits that each food has to offer. Enjoy foods with different tastes, textures and colours. Variety is the spice of life, so enjoy!

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