

# Eating well for good health

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When I was little, health food meant mom's cardboard like whole wheat carob cookies. Now, times are different. Eating well can be simple and delicious. Your diet does not have to be complex. You don't have to use Atkins, Zone, Ornish, or South Beach to be healthy.

If you want to eat a healthier diet, start by looking at the big picture. There are just a few basic macronutrients; fat, protein, carbohydrates, and water.

Fat tastes wonderful. It is the most concentrated source of energy we typically take in. It also triggers the hormone that tells us we are full. Dietary fat helps us absorb fat soluble vitamins such as A, D, E and K. Fats slow carbohydrate absorption, and thus reduce insulin spikes. The balance of fats we take in also helps control our hormones, and level of inflammation. The membranes around our cells are made of fats. For the best dietary balance, many specialists recommend consuming around 30% of our calories as healthy fats.

There are many healthy fats. Olive oil is a fat that is healthy and versatile. If you are pan frying at high heat, macadamia nut oil or grapeseed oils are good choices. Flax and cold water fish both provide very healthy fats. Butter, sour cream, and even coconut oil or milk are far superior to margarine. Include nuts such as pecans, walnuts, and almonds. Avocados also provide good fats.

Fats to avoid include: hydrogenated oils, trans fats, and other man made Franken-fats. These fats promote inflammation and may increase the risk of heart problems. Limit corn oil, soy oil, canola oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, wheatgerm oil, cottonseed oil and walnut oil. These oils become rancid quickly. They are treated with high heat to reduce the odor of their rancidity.

Much of the work of the body is done by proteins. They give us our structure. They also function as enzymes, carrier molecules like hemoglobin, and give our muscles the ability to contract. Proteins are made up of amino acids. There are over 100,000 proteins in the human body. Many people try to consume around 40% of their calories as protein.

Healthy protein sources are plentiful. Fish, poultry (especially Cornish game hens), eggs, lamb, lean beef, pork, venison, buffalo, nuts, seeds, beans, grains and other legumes all give us protein. For most people, a palm-sized protein serving three times daily is sufficient. Women should shoot for 14-18gm of protein per meal. Men should shoot for 18-20gm of protein. Wild caught fish should be eaten at least twice a week. Cottage cheese and yogurt are the best sources of dairy protein. Goat's milk dairy is far superior to cow's milk.

Consume these low mercury fish (the list starts with the lowest mercury levels): clam, ocean perch, salmon (always look for Alaskan not Atlantic), shrimp, whiting, tilapia, oyster, hake, sardine, haddock, crawfish, pollock, anchovies, herring, flounder, sole, mullet, catfish, scallop, Atlantic mackerel.

Avoid these mercury toxic fish (starting with the most toxic): tilefish, shark, swordfish, king mackerel, bigeye tuna, orange roughy, marlin, grouper, Spanish mackerel, tuna, Chilean bass, bluefish, lobster, white croaker, scorpion fish, weakfish, sea trout, halibut, sablefish, saltwater bass, snapper

Some protein sources are not the best for our bodies. Soy is a common allergen associated with

increased risk of diabetes when fed to babies. When it is not produced in a fermented form such as tempeh or miso, the amino acids in soy are hard to digest. It may also reduce thyroid function.

Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for the body. For simplicity, we'll say there are two different types of carbs. There are complex carbohydrates, and simple sugars. Fibers are complex carbohydrates that don't typically absorb into the bloodstream. They keep us regular, feed our intestines, slow the absorption of simpler carbs and provide food for the good bacteria that lives in us. Government guidelines suggest a minimum of 25gm of fiber daily. Starches such as those in beans and potatoes are also complex carbohydrates. Simple sugars may come from fruits or table sugar. Shoot for around 40% of your calories from healthy carbohydrates.

Whole grains, whole fruits, beans, green vegetables, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, zucchini, asparagus, green beans, celery and lentils all provide healthy carbohydrates. Amaranth, millet, buckwheat, and quinoa are all especially healthy grains to include.

Limit high fructose corn syrup and white carbohydrates such as white flour, white sugar and white potatoes. Also limit the artificial sweetener aspartame/Nutrisweet®, which some researchers link with low serotonin levels. If you choose to include refined carbohydrates such as white flour, sugar and potatoes, eat them after eating healthier foods containing good fats, protein or fiber.

**RED LIGHT FOODS: Always buy the following foods organically.** Peaches, Apples, Bell Peppers, Celery, Nectarines, Strawberries, Cherries, Pears, Imported Grapes, Spinach, Lettuce, Potatoes, Carrots, Green Beans, Hot Peppers, Cucumbers, Raisins, Peanuts, Veal, Ground Beef, Milk, Butter, frozen Pizza, frozen French Fries

**YELLOW LIGHT FOODS: If available, buy organically** Raspberries, Plums, Domestic Grapes, Grapefruit, Tangerines, Mushrooms, Cantaloupe, Honeydew Melons, Sweet Potatoes, Pork, Yogurt, frozen Chicken Dinners

**GREEN LIGHT FOODS: Pesticide loads are low in these foods. Don't worry about buying organic.** Tomatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Watermelon, Winter Squash, Cauliflower, Blueberries, Papaya, Broccoli, Cabbage, Bananas, Kiwi, frozen Sweet Peas, Asparagus, Mangoes, Pineapples, frozen Sweet Corn, Avocados, Onions, canned soups, and canned spaghetti

**Especially healthy foods to try to consume:**

ginger, turmeric, mushrooms (shiitaki and reishi especially), green tea, garlic, berries, tomatoes, watermelon, kidney beans, peppers, apricots, sesame seeds, flax oil or ground seeds, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, fermented dairy like kefir or goat yogurt, kim chi (if you can tolerate it), beets, kale, artichokes, carrots, collard greens, figs, low mercury fish, watercress, apples, beans, celery, eggs, tempeh, adzuki beans, bitter greens, escarole, pears, squash, arugula, brussel sprouts, lemon, sweet potato, asparagus, avocados, chicory, mangos, mung beans, mustard greens, nettles, brown rice, dates, garlic, organic grapes, kiwi, oatmeal, onion, Alaskan salmon, string beans, almonds, eggplant, horseradish, papaya, sprouts, tangerines, walnuts

There are just a few other simple ways to improve your diet.

- Remove temptations from your house. If you leave unhealthy foods in your house, you will eventually eat them. When you do crave a food you know is not healthy, delay eating it for 10 minutes. Use mouthwash or a few drops of an extract of gymnema, many sugary foods do not taste as good after these measures. If you still want the food, eat something healthy then a small

portion of the unhealthy food.

- Substitute fruit for sugary foods.
- Take a multiple vitamin daily in the middle of a meal. You may also want to add minerals such as calcium and magnesium if you have chocolate cravings.
- Eat slowly and enjoy your food. Eat something, even just a handful of nuts, every 3-4 hours to keep blood sugar steady. Skipping a meal throws off your blood sugar for a day. Always eat a breakfast that is not sweet.
- Variety is the spice of life. It also helps you get a variety of nutrients.
- Limit caffeine due to its affect on the adrenal glands, kidneys, pancreas, and brain.
- Start your meals with protein, fat and vegetables. Always eat carbohydrates last because other foods reduce the damage you'll get from carbs.
- Consume enough water. All of the chemistry of your body depends on it. Drink a full glass of water 15 minutes before meals instead of washing down your food with liquids. 10% dehydration may decrease energy as much as 50%.
- Organic foods provide more nutrients due to better fertilization. They also limit toxin exposure.
- If you eat out, consider open faced sandwiches, vegetables, salads, hamburger patty, chicken breast, eggs, and ethnic foods such as Chinese, Japanese, Thai or Mexican food. Limit fried foods and fast food salad dressings.
- Use sea salts that are iodized so that you get trace minerals and support your thyroid.
- Limit alcohol. It has almost twice the number of calories per gram as protein or carbohydrates. It actually depletes the body of nutrients.
- If you are trying to lose weight, consider a fiber supplement such as PGX 30 min before eating. It slows sugar absorption, binds some fat, and helps you feel full so you relearn portion sizes.
- Don't be too serious. If you eat healthy foods 80 percent of the time, you can be indulgent 20 percent of the time. If you are being indulgent, eat healthy foods first and keep your portion size small.

Seth McLaughlin is licensed as a massage therapist, certified as a nutritional consultant, certified as a pharmacy technician. He worked at Mac's Medicine Mart as a clinical herbalist, aromatherapist and compounding pharmacy technician since 1995. He is one of the authors of *Complementary and Alternative Medicine Secrets*, edited by Wendy Kohatsu, MD. Seth writes a column every other month for Knoxville Perspectives. Seth owns Essential Therapies in Kingsport and Johnson City. To contact Seth about this article or becoming healthy, check out [www.e-therapies.net](http://www.e-therapies.net) or call 392-4325.