



The Better Body

Eating for Health



In trying to stay as healthy as possible, it is easy to fall for gimmicks, promises and false claims. Diet powders and supplements, liquid meals and mega-vitamins are not what healthful eating is all about.

Healthful eating is not hard; it's a matter of choice. So, how do you get started? The first step is to become an educated consumer. This means knowing how to use the Food Guide Pyramid, how to read product labels to determine what to buy, and how to avoid fat traps at home and when eating out. Educated consumers also know that "diet" is not a dirty word. It simply refers to the pattern of food choices that people make.

Eating healthy foods isn't just about changing your diet—it's about changing your lifestyle. It's changing your focus to improving your overall health. What we eat has been connected to many diseases, including cancer and heart disease. And for women with disabilities, eating well can help reduce or prevent chronic diseases that all women are at risk for as well as complications of disability.

A healthy diet

One very good pattern that we can follow for health is the Food Guide Pyramid (next page). The Food Pyramid reflects current thinking about a healthy diet, one with fewer fatty foods and more vegetables and fruits. For each food group, a range of servings is recommended. Most women, children, and some older adults need the lowest number of servings shown for each food group. Teen girls, active women and most men need servings somewhere in the middle of those shown. Teen boys, active men and very active women need the highest number of servings shown.

Eating the suggested number of servings in each group will provide the right amount of protein, starches, and fats and will provide a healthy balance to the diet. It can also ensure that you get the nutrients you need daily and can help you control your weight. A good rule of thumb is to eat five servings of fruits or vegetables daily. Remember: Five a Day, The Easy Way.

Try three meals and two snacks a day. Studies show that the body handles food better when it comes in smaller, regular amounts than in one or two huge meals. Most people should try to make dinner a lighter meal because they don't need as many calories for energy in the evening. You might consider eating four to six small meals during the day.

A disability may result in special dietary needs as well. The nature of the disability can affect the number of calories a woman needs in her diet. Women with disabilities that increase muscle activity and/or muscle tone may need more calories to maintain healthy weight. Women with disabilities that decrease muscle activity and/or lower muscle tone may need fewer than average. One way to tell your calorie needs is to look at your weight. If you are underweight, you might need more calories; if you are overweight, you might need fewer calories.

Are you label conscious?

The healthiest diets use more fresh foods than packaged foods. But the convenience and ease of preparation of packaged foods is often a boon for the busy woman and even more so for the woman with a disability. And when you understand what you're getting, you can be sure of making the best choices.

Food labeling has improved in recent years. Certain information such as total calories, total fat, protein and carbohydrate is required on the nutrient label. The percent of daily values must also be included so that the numbers associated with each nutrient are not misleading. For example, if a food item has 140 mg of sodium, that may sound high. But that is actually only 6 percent of the daily recommended amount (2,400 mg of sodium).

Another good source of information about packaged foods is the list of ingredients. Ingredients are always listed in order of prominence by weight. So check what you're paying for. Do you really want the packaged product whose first ingredient is food starch, sugar or salt?

Some other terms on packages that can be confusing are words like "reduced," "light," "less" and "low." The Food and Drug Administration has specific definitions for each of these.

- "Reduced," "less" and "light" are used when comparing a nutritionally altered product to a regular product. For example, you can have reduced-fat potato chips when compared to regular potato chips.
- The term "low" can be used on any product that can be eaten frequently without exceeding di-

etary guidelines for one or more of the following components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and calories.

While it's often a good choice to choose "low" or "reduced" foods, the benefits will diminish if you double the portion size.

Building bones

Women need strong bones to prevent osteoporosis. Key bone-builders include diet, exercise and hormones. For women who can't do weight-bearing exercise and for those on certain medications, diet is doubly important to prevent osteoporosis. Diets rich in calcium and vitamin D help build bone mass and slow bone loss that occurs with aging. Dairy foods have

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THE YOUR USDA GUIDE FOOD TO DAILY GUIDE FOOD PYRAMID CHOICES

The Food Guide Pyramid

helps you eat better every day. Start with plenty of breads, cereals, rice, pasta, vegetables and fruits. Add two to three servings from the milk group and two to three servings from the meat group. Each food group provides some, but not all, of the nutrients you need. No one food group is more important than another—for good health you need them all. The pyramid was designed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Boning Up On Calcium



- | | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The main mineral that adds strength and stiffness to your bones is iron. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Some good sources of calcium are dairy products, leafy green vegetables, and nuts. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Women reach their peak bone mass by around age 50. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. From the time you're 11 until you're 70, you need about 1,200 mg of calcium a day. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Getting enough calcium and weight-bearing exercise in the teen years can reduce your risk of bone fractures later in life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Your bones need vitamin C to move calcium from the intestine to the blood and into bone. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Soda pop is a good source of calcium. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Alcohol abuse can cause loss of calcium in the urine. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Women who are thin and small-framed have less risk of osteoporosis. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Calcium will give you foolproof protection against bone loss and osteoporosis. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

ANSWERS

1. **False.** The main mineral in bones is calcium, which adds strength and stiffness to bones. During bone growth, the body builds a scaffold of protein and fills this in with calcium-rich mineral.

2. **True.** Good sources of calcium include dairy products, leafy green vegetables, nuts, seeds, tofu, sardines, and dried fruit. Most flour is fortified with calcium carbonate. Some prepared foods as orange juice, cereals, and breakfast bars have calcium added to them.

3. **False.** Women reach their peak bone mass by around age 25 to 30 years, while men build bone until about age 30 to 35. The body builds 75–85% of the skeleton during adolescence. The amount of peak bone mass you reach depends largely on your genes.

4. **True.** The recommended calcium intake for women up to age 50 is 1,000 mg per day. Women 51 and up should get 1,200 mg of calcium a day.

5. **True.** Because peak bone mass is reached in the young adult years, adequate calcium in the adolescent years is critical for building optimal strong bones. With age, the breakdown outpaces the buildup, and in late middle age bone density lessens when needed calcium is withdrawn from bone for such tasks as blood clotting and muscle contractions.

6. **False.** Your bones need Vitamin D to move calcium from the intestine to the bloodstream and into your bones. You can get Vitamin D from short, normal day-to-day exposure of your arms and legs to sun and from foods fortified with the vitamin.

Nearly all U.S. milk has vitamins D and A added. And it has magnesium and zinc.

7. **False.** Soda pop is not a source of calcium. In fact, sodas contain phosphorus and phosphates that can cause calcium loss.

8. **True.** Alcohol abuse can cause loss of calcium, magnesium and zinc in the urine. Many who abuse alcohol also have poor diets and weaker bones.

9. **False.** Women who are thin and small-framed have a higher risk for osteoporosis.

10. **False.** Calcium is critical, but even a high intake won't fully protect you against bone loss due to estrogen deficiency, physical inactivity, alcohol abuse, smoking, or some medical disorders and treatments.

For more information

Dairy Council of California
1101 National Drive, Suite B
Sacramento, CA 95834
<www.dairyCouncilofca.org/>

National Institutes of Health, Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases
1232 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037-1292
202-223-0344
<www.osteoporosis.nih.gov/>

National Osteoporosis Foundation
P.O. Box 96616
Washington, DC 20077-7456
<www.nof.org/>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
<www.fda.gov/>

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the highest amounts of calcium. Lower-fat dairy foods such as skim milk, lower-fat yogurt and cheese are the best choices.

Other foods that are good sources of calcium include sardines, canned salmon with bones, dried beans, almonds, broccoli, kale, collards, mustard greens, and fortified fruit juices.

Protect your heart

An important factor in preventing heart disease is your diet. Using the Food Pyramid helps you tailor a diet that protects you from heart disease. Saturated fat and cholesterol are the two biggest threats to your heart. Choosing lean meats, low-fat dairy foods and small amounts of spreads, fats and oils helps reduce these threats. Sodium, which is found in salt, can lead to high blood pressure in some people.

Meals with plenty of vegetables and limited packaged foods usually are lower in sodium and provide fiber that can help lower high blood cholesterol. According to several studies, the B-vitamin folic acid may help fight heart disease and can protect against birth defects in infants when taken before and during pregnancy. Women should get .4 mg folic acid daily and a total of .8 mg a day during pregnancy. The FDA recommends no more than 1 mg of folic acid a day.

Reduce cancer risk

Diet is also linked to cancer. According to the Massachusetts Medical Society, diet is responsible for about 30 percent of all cancers. Many studies have

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ADEQUATE FOLIC ACID BEFORE PREGNANCY LOWERS CHANCES OF SOME BIRTH DEFECTS

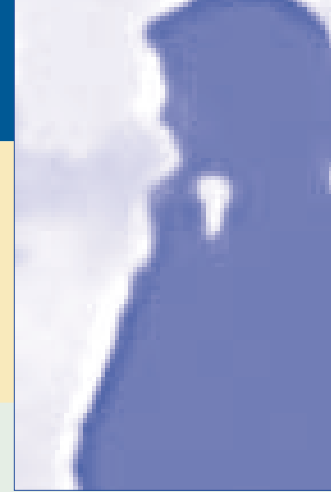
If you plan to have children some day, here's important information for the future mother-to-be: think folic acid now.

Folic acid, which is a synthetic form of folate, is an important vitamin and is found in a variety of foods and added to many vitamin and mineral supplements. Folate is needed both before and in the first weeks of pregnancy and can help reduce the risk of certain serious and common birth defects, called neural tube defects, which affect the brain and spinal cord.

The tricky part is that neural tube defects can occur in an embryo before a woman realizes she's pregnant. That's why it's important for all women of childbearing age (15 to 45) to include adequate folic acid in their diets. If a woman becomes pregnant, folic acid reduces the chance of the baby having a birth defect of the brain or spinal cord.

Nutrition information on food and dietary supplement labels can help women determine whether they are getting enough folate, which is 400 micrograms (0.4 milligrams) a day before pregnancy and 800 micrograms a day during pregnancy.

Many women between 19 and 50 consume much less than 400 micrograms of folate a day, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Several studies have shown a correlation between a lack of folic acid intake and heart and stroke problems. However, too much folic acid can mask certain other problems such as vitamin B12 deficiency. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends no more than one milligram of folic acid a day.

Folate occurs naturally in a variety of foods, including liver; dark green, leafy vegetables such as collards, turnip greens, Romaine lettuce, broccoli and asparagus; citrus fruits and juices; whole-grain products; wheat germ; dried beans and peas such as pinto, navy and lima beans, chickpeas and black-eyed peas.

Folate also can be obtained from dietary supplements, such as folic acid tablets and multivitamins with folic acid, and from fortified breakfast cereals.

For more information

Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse

5600 Fishers Lane, Room 18A-55,
Rockville, MD 20857
703-821-8955
<www.nmchc.org/>

March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation

1275 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains, NY 10605
914-428-7100
888-663-4637
<www.modimes.org/>

HEALTHY TIPS FOR EATING OUT

WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED?

- How is the food prepared?
- How big is the entrée?
- What comes on it?
- What substitutions can be made?

AVOID . . .

- Fried
- Sauteed
- Creamed
- Breaded
- Cheese
- Sauces
- Doubles

ASK FOR . . .

- Dressing, butter, sour cream on the side
- Unsweetened iced tea
- Lowfat milk for your coffee
- Baked, roasted, steamed, boiled, poached, grilled entrees
- Whole grain breads

DELICATESSEN DINING

- Hold the mayo
- Choose lean cut meats
- Hold the chips
- Lowfat or no cheese

FAST FOOD

- Add a salad
- Choose charbroiled or roasted sandwiches
- Avoid the fries
- Choose lower fat options
- Order water
- Have it your way




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shown that diets high in fruits and vegetables can help reduce the risk of almost all cancers. High-fat diets, long associated with heart disease, may also increase the risk of developing certain cancers, including colon and breast cancer. Again, the Food Pyramid can come to the rescue in helping to reduce the risk of cancer.

Up with fiber

Getting enough fiber can help prevent constipation that may occur with limited mobility or decreased muscle tone. To increase fiber, choose mainly whole-grain bread products and cereals, emphasize fresh fruits over juices and eat more vegetables. Fiber intake should be at least 20–25 grams per day. Fiber amount should be listed on the labels of packaged foods.

Getting Started


So take a look at what you eat every day and compare it to the recommended servings in the Food Pyramid. It might be helpful to keep a food journal of what and when you eat. You don't have to radically change your diet overnight. Start by making small changes that you're comfortable with. Drink an extra glass of water in the morning. Take an apple to eat during your work break. Try leaving the mayonnaise off your deli sandwich. You'll find that eating a healthy diet is easier than you think; and you'll feel better for it, too! 

By Casey Czaplinski, registered dietician, Women's Health Branch of the NC Division of Public Health, and Sally McCormick, writer, Woodward Communications

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY DIET

Even in today's world of convenience foods, fast foods and dining out, it's possible to choose foods that fit into your healthy diet, if you follow some simple guidelines:

- Keep healthful snack foods on hand, like graham crackers, pretzels, fruit, carrot sticks, and pudding.
- Limit foods that you can't resist. Instead of baking a batch of cookies that you'll overindulge on, treat yourself to a fresh bakery cookie periodically.
- Separate eating from other activities. Don't graze while doing other things like watching TV or reading a book.
- Plan your meals and snacks. If there are times when you're likely to overeat, plan an activity for those times.
- Before going to parties, eat a light, healthy snack and drink plenty of water. Select vegetables and fruits, and limit cheeses, nuts, and sausages. Socialize away from the snack table.
- Choose entrees that are prepared without gravy, glazes, bread-ing, cream sauce or au gratin.
- Look for items that have been baked, steamed, roasted or charbroiled. Entrees served in marinara or tomato sauce are also good choices.
- Choose meats and vegetables that have not been fried. Ask for a baked potato instead of french fries.
- Watch out for those fat-laden salad dressings. Regular salad dressing is the source of most of the fat in the diets of many women. Order fat-free dressing, or have your dressing served on the side and use sparingly.
- Choose fruit for dessert.
- You may want to order a la carte instead of a multi-course dinner to keep amounts of food smaller.

Following these tips, however, doesn't mean you have to give up your favorite foods. Just remember to eat them in moderation. Have smaller servings, or choose them less often. And if you choose to splurge every once and a while, enjoy! When you build your diet on the Food Pyramid, an occasional indulgence is not a problem. 

MAKING LIFE EASIER IN THE KITCHEN

There are lots of gadgets and tricks for making it easier and safer in the kitchen for people with disabilities. While you are your own best problem solver, it's good to learn from the experiences of others. We polled our advisors and combed the catalogues, and here's a few of our favorites:

- If you use a wheelchair or need to sit while cooking, hang an unbreakable mirror (toy or auto supply stores) at an angle above the stove so that you can see into the pots on the stovetop.
- Dysom, a foam-like product which is commonly placed under rugs to keep them from slipping, is a great jar opener. It can be purchased from home improvement stores. Paint can openers and bottle openers can also be used to pry apart the lid and jar so the jar can be opened with less hand strength.
- Place a piece of non-slip plastic shelf lining under a dish to keep it from sliding on the table.
- Choose pots, pans and utensils that have flat handles. They are much easier to grip. For larger pots and pans, choose ones with handles on each side so that you can lift them without gripping.
- If you use a wheelchair, have the doors and shelves removed from cabinets under your sink.
- Put a lazy Susan on a refrigerator shelf or cabinet shelf. This will make it easier to reach items that tend to disappear in the back.



▲ (ABOVE) If you use a wheelchair, set a flat board on your lap to help carry things around the kitchen. You might want to use one of those bean-filled lap desks or a metal cookie sheet for a base. Make sure the surface is heat-proof to avoid burns.

- To stabilize a mixing bowl, set it in a drawer and shut the drawer against the bowl's sides, lean against the drawer to keep pressure on the bowl's sides, which prevents it from rotating as you stir or beat the ingredients in it.
- Choose knives that are lightweight and balanced so that the handle is about as heavy as the blade. If you cannot easily grip the knife, balance it in the crook of your hand to guide it and let the weight and sharpness do the cutting.



▲ (ABOVE) Keep an extended reacher handy to make it easier to reach things on higher shelves.

- Keep items that you use the most near the front of the cabinets and in places you can reach. Consider having pullout shelves installed in your cabinets.
- To make the refrigerator door or cabinet doors easier to open, tie a loop of ribbon or rope around the door handle. Slip your forearm through the loop and pull the door open.
- Put a towel or fabric mat under appliances on your counter. This makes it easier to pull the appliance to the front of the counter.
- Use a long-handled spoon to help lift pot lids. This helps balance the weight of the lid.

For more information:

ABLEDATA

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 930
Silver Spring, MD 20910
800-227-0216.
<www.abledata.com/text2/default.htm>

Easy Things to Make . . . To Make Things Easy

by Doreen Greenstein
Brookline Books: MA. 1997

Ableware

973-628-7600
<www.maddak.com>

Maxi-Aids Products catalog

800-522-6294
<www.maxiaids.com/>

Oxo Good Grips

by General Housewares
800-545-4411 <worldkitchen.com/brands/oxo/index.asp>

Mealtime Manual for People with Disabilities and the Aging: Meal preparation and training

by Judith Lannefeld Klinger and the Howard Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine
856-848-1000

Email: <orders@slackinc.com>

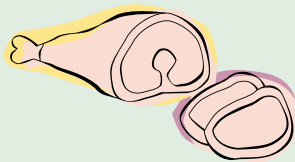
SO WHAT IS A SERVING SIZE?

Most serving sizes—at home and in restaurants—are much too large. For example, the recommended **two-ounce** serving of **meat** is approximately the size of a **junior hamburger** at a fast-food restaurant. However, the smallest steak on a menu might be six ounces—three times the recommended serving size.



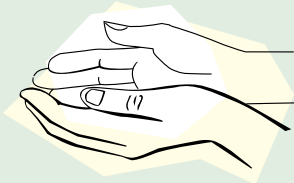
Although we don't take scales and measuring cups to the dinner table with us, we can use some **easy guidelines** for determining serving sizes:

One serving of **meat, fish, or chicken** should be about the size of a **deck of cards**.



A **half-cup** is about the same amount as a **handful**;

one cup would be a **double handful**



When eating out, ask if you can have a half portion, take home half your meal to eat the next day or share your meal with a friend.

THE 80% SOLUTION

The most important nutrient — water — is usually left off the recommended food charts.

You should drink about eight glasses (two quarts) of fluid each day. That doesn't mean you have to actually drink all that water. Other liquids count, too, like milk, juices and soups. Products that contain caffeine, like coffee, tea, and carbonated drinks, don't count. Caffeine works as a diuretic, pulling water out of the body.



If you drink a lot of bottled water, remember that it probably does not contain fluoride which helps fortify teeth against decay. In fact, the number of cavities has gone up with the popularity of bottled water.

MORE MAY NOT BE BETTER

When it comes to calcium and vitamin D, more—like most vitamins—is not necessarily better. Taking more than 2,500 mg of calcium and more than 2,000 I.U. vitamin D may lead to calcium deposits in the kidneys and arteries.

Excessive vitamin D at higher levels can cause severe illness.