

WELLNESS TIPS

March is National Nutrition Month

Tips for Healthier Eating

This week's tips provide a variety of suggestions for more healthy eating.

1. Eating breakfast contributes to improved concentration and energy. People who regularly eat a healthy breakfast also tend to have an easier time managing their weight and have good cholesterol levels. (Mayo Clinic). Foods do not have to be limited to those traditionally eaten at breakfast. It could be a leftover slice of veggie pizza or a sandwich.
2. Aim for eating smarter rather than excessively limiting what you eat. Maintaining or losing weight is not just about excessively restricting calories. Depriving oneself can backfire because it is difficult to sustain. Eliminating a food group, especially for long periods of time, does not meet the body's needs and can contribute to health problems. If weight loss is the goal, on-going deprivation can result in decreased metabolism, making weight loss more difficult.
3. It is not just about counting calories. It is important to consume calories from a variety of nutrient-rich foods to meet the body's needs. You can consume enough calories but not have nutritional balance in meeting the body's needs for vitamins and minerals, for example. Choose nutrient-rich foods.
4. All fats are not equal, and all fats are not bad. Fat is important to a healthy diet, facilitating absorption of some fat-soluble vitamins (such as A, D, E, K, and carotenoids), providing energy, and contributing to feelings of fullness after eating. Focus on consuming the healthy fats, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated, found in extra virgin olive oil, peanut oil, canola oil, nuts, seeds, avocados, salmon, and tuna, for example. Consuming polyunsaturated fats (omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids) in place of saturated fats reduces harmful LDL cholesterol, improves the cholesterol profile, and lowers triglycerides.

Good dietary practices include minimizing consumption of trans fat, which is formed by adding hydrogen to vegetable oil, causing it to become solid at room temperature. Trans fat increases risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and negatively impacts LDL and HDL cholesterol levels. It is added to many manufactured food products because it is less likely to spoil, increasing shelf life. It is found in baked goods,

shortening and margarine, microwave popcorn, frozen pizza, and fried foods. Small levels also occur naturally in some meat and dairy products, but evidence isn't clear about its impact on health.

Switching to reduced fat or fat-free foods may result in fewer calories (but not always) but these foods often have a higher sugar content, plus other additives.

5. Don't be fooled by the advertising. While we all know we should limit sugar in our diets, it's important to recognize sources of hidden sugars in food, such as fructose, sucrose, and glucose. Sugar may be added to low-fat/nonfat foods to enhance flavor.

Most veggie chips are vegetable powder flour with added starch, which are similar to tortilla chips in terms of nutrition. If you would like to have veggie chips, choose a good quality chip, check the label and choose a chip which is made with 1-2 ingredients. There are good chips such as carrot or beet chips, that contain the vegetable plus salt.

A healthier choice would be fresh vegetables with hummus. Mini vegetables such as carrots and peppers are convenient and full of nutrients.

6. Not all processed foods are "bad". Almost any food preparation is processing and includes cooking, canning, freezing, and dehydrating. Again, read the labels and look for minimal ingredients. Choose frozen foods without added sauces or syrups. Rinse the salty liquid from canned beans. Check whole grain cereals for added sugar. Choose plain yogurt and add fresh fruit rather than flavored yogurts.
7. Increase plant foods in your diet. Some recent studies suggest this may decrease risk of developing some diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Beans and pulses (edible seeds that grow in pods - beans, peas, and lentils) are good plant sources of protein and contain fiber, vitamins and minerals. You have probably heard the adage "eat a rainbow" of fruits and vegetables. Eating a variety of colors provides a range of antioxidants.

Choose one or two dietary changes that seem manageable. The goal is to move toward a balanced diet with healthy choices. This does not necessarily mean banning certain foods, but to choose them on a less frequent basis and limit the amount you eat. French fries are good, but you do not need to order the super-size! And learn how to read the labels when you shop!

Harvard Men's Health Watch. "Not all Processed Foods are Unhealthy." June 2015.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/not-all-processed-foods-are-unhealthy>

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<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/confused-by-nutrition-advice-these-7-tips-will-help-you/>

Mayo Clinic. "Trans fat is Double Trouble for Your Heart." February 13, 2020.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/in-depth/trans-fat/art-20046114>

The Mayo Clinic Diet. "7 Tips for Breaking Breakfast Barriers." March 24, 2021.

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Webmd.com. "Foods High in Trans Fat." October 8, 2020.

<https://www.webmd.com/diet/foods-high-in-trans-fat#1>

Check the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment for questions and concerns.

Stay safe and stay well!

Liz Schacht elizabeth-schacht@uiowa.edu

Medical Student Counseling Center osac-mscc@uiowa.edu 319-335-8056 1240 MERF