

SPECIAL EDITION!

Spring is a time of renewal – what better time to do something positive for your health? Our friends at CIGNA Healthcare shared these tips for making

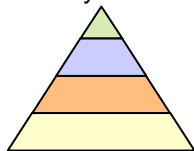
GOOD CHOICES... GREAT CHANGES!

Most of us are aware of the new food pyramid, published by the US Department of Agriculture, which recommends

- fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- lean meats, poultry, fish, dried beans/peas, eggs and nuts; and,
- a diet low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars

The pyramid offers detailed recommendations for choosing foods to help us achieve and maintain better health. The guidelines, based on age, gender, and activity levels, focus on smart choices from every food group (getting the most nutrition out of calories), and finding balance between food intake and physical activity (“calories in, calories out”).

Why is your diet so important? Well, you really are what you eat! – the food (and beverages) we put into our bodies provide the nutrients – essential vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and fats – that nourish us, provide us the energy for every-day activities, and repair damage done by illness and injuries. Selecting the right amount of the right foods is critical to your health!



HOW DOES THE PYRAMID WORK? –

There are pyramids that recommend nutrition for preschoolers, kids 6-11, pregnant and nursing women, and general instructions for the rest of us. Each food group is described in detail, with suggested food sources for the best nutrition, and recommended daily servings *depending on age, sex and activity level*:

Grains: look for whole grain products rather than refined grains (white flour, white rice); 1 ½ - 4 one-ounce servings per day (a serving is generally one slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, ½ cup of cooked rice, etc.)

Vegetables: 1-3 cups per day; choose a variety and look for dark colors – dark green leafy vegetables, orange veggies like carrots, squashes, etc. for most nutrition

Fruits: 1-2 cups per day, best fresh or frozen; 1 cup of fresh fruit or 1 cup of 100% fruit juice (not the sugar-loaded fruit cocktail drinks!) or ½ cup of dried fruit

Milk products: 2 - 3 servings per day – look for fat-free or low fat milk, cheeses, yogurt, etc. (Foods like cream cheese are also dairy products, but have much less calcium and more calories than other healthier dairy options!)

Meats/eggs/dried beans: 2 – 6 ½ ounces of lean, lowfat meats – prepare it by baking, broiling or grilling to avoid adding more fat calories; substitute cold-water fish like salmon, tuna, or halibut for an extra boost in Omega-3 fatty acids which can help lower your cholesterol (that's right! – not all fats are bad...)

Oils/fats: limit your intake to 3 – 7 teaspoons per day (this includes butter, shortening, margarine, vegetable and nut oils... most of us get enough fat each day from our meats, dairy products, salad dressings, etc.)



Here are some tips for all of us, whether we think we're healthy or are trying to improve our dietary habits...

- **SLIM DOWN!** – if you're overweight, losing weight is one of the best things you can do for yourself. But be sure not to eat too little: when you drastically cut calories, your body thinks it is being starved, and your metabolism slows down, trying to conserve energy and survive. In order to lose weight, we must burn more calories than we're eating, so exercise!
- **DRINK UP!** – drink about eight glasses of water per day: if you're exercising you should drink more fluids; check with your physician if you have been told you have a medical condition that requires you to restrict your fluids (such as congestive heart disease or kidney disease). Don't count caffeinated beverages (coffee, cola) in your eight glasses of fluids, because caffeine is a diuretic, which makes your body lose more water!
- **GET MOVING!** – exercise (e.g., a brisk walk) for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week to keep your heart healthy; walk more, instead of driving to the corner store; at work, park a few blocks away or at the farthest end of the lot and walk to and from your job site; use stairs instead of elevators, whenever you can...
- **EAT RIGHT!** – enjoy a healthy snack, such as fruit or brown rice cakes, between meals to boost your energy, curb your appetite and increase your metabolism; make salad a main part of your meal plan, choosing lettuces with darker leaves, such as romaine or red leaf, since they have more nutrients than those with lighter leaves (e.g., iceberg)

Remember, choosing the right foods, the right amounts and eating throughout the day (not skipping meals, then binge-eating) will help control your weight, promote a healthy heart, keep your blood pressure in check, and avoid (or control) diabetes. You can begin to make healthy changes in small steps: keeping healthy snacks around (carrot and celery sticks, 10-12 almonds); ordering from the “lite lunch” menu at the restaurant; eating at regular intervals. Then, learn to read food labels and understand nutritional content of foods, to achieve your “great changes”! For more info, go to <http://mypyramid.gov>

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