

# FOOD CHOICES & CALORIES

**Sufficient food and calories** are needed to achieve and maintain a medically healthy weight—neither overweight nor underweight. A sedentary woman might maintain healthy weight on 1800 calories per day while a very active woman might require 2800 calories per day. Male caloric requirements are correspondingly higher.

**Fruits and vegetables.** The goal is nine servings a day (2 cups of fruit and 2-1/2 cups of veggies). Choose dark green and orange items often, plus beans, other starchy vegetables and root vegetables for a wide selection of vitamins, minerals, anti-oxidants, and micro nutrients. Choose whole fruits over juice. It contains healthy fiber and micro nutrients not found in juice, which can be high in sugar. Don't panic. Serving sizes for fruits and veggies are small, just half a cup.

**Whole grains.** The goal is three or more servings of whole wheat, brown rice, or other unprocessed grains such as old-fashioned oatmeal. Serving size is only 1 ounce, which is a single slice of bread or 1/2 cup of cooked cereal.

**Dairy foods.** The goal is three cups of fat-free or low-fat milk per day or equivalent amounts of yoghurt, cheese, etc. Dairy foods provide calcium and protein, both of which are needed for healthy muscles and bones. Avoid whole-fat dairy selections. Low-fat items are nutritious without the saturated fat. Recommended daily allowances: at least 1200 mg. per day of calcium for women who menstruate and 1500 mg. per day for those who don't. Men also need calcium for strong bones. If you are afraid of the calories in dairy products, research (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2003) suggests that calcium also helps control blood pressure and may aid in the breakdown of body fat and cause fat cells to make less fat.

Keep **cholesterol** consumption down. That means eating fewer animal foods and more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains (cereals, bread, pasta, etc.)

**Meat, fish, poultry, and other protein.** The goal is only 6-7 ounces per day, or about two servings, each the size of the palm of your hand. Choose low fat items such as chicken breast over fatty red meat. One exception: fatty fish such as salmon and tuna contain Omega-3 fatty acids that protect the heart and cardiovascular system against damage. The goal is two servings of fish a week.

**Limit intake of sugar, salt, and alcohol**, which carry health risks if consumed in excess. Watch out for "high-fructose corn syrup" in processed foods and soft drinks. It is another type of sugar. Soft drinks are notoriously high in sugar. So is alcohol in addition to being an intoxicant. If you drink, do so in moderation, which is defined as no more than one five-ounce glass of wine, OR one 12-ounce can of beer, OR one ounce of distilled spirits per day for women. Because of differences in physiology, moderate alcohol usage for men is defined as two servings per day.

**Healthy fat.** Don't eliminate all fat from your diet. Some is necessary for life and health. Just make sure that most of it is unsaturated or mono saturated, such as that found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Olive and canola oils are particularly healthful.

**Unhealthy fat.** The saturated fat found in regular ice cream, red meat, whole-fat dairy foods (4% milk, cream, butter), and processed foods should be limited to 10 percent or less of your daily fat intake. Some saturated fat is necessary, but very little. Especially unhealthy are trans fats, which increase heart disease risk. Check labels and avoid anything with coconut oil, palm oil and "hydrogenated vegetable oil." The foods most often containing trans fats are snack foods, packaged baked goods, and stick margarine.

**Salt and potassium.** For the sake of your heart, especially in later life, it's a good idea to limit salt intake to 1500-2000 milligrams per day. Read labels and don't add extra salt at table. Canned soup, frozen dinners, and snack foods such as chips are big sources of excess salt. Everyone needs potassium. Good sources are bananas, oranges, raisins, apricots, avocados, dates, and cantaloupe.

**What about a vitamin pill?** There is no scientific evidence at this point that justifies taking mega doses of any vitamin or mineral. In fact, you can hurt yourself by overdoing supplements. That having been said, one multi vitamin and mineral pill per day may be a good idea, especially if your diet is lacking in some areas. Please check with your physician to make sure it's appropriate for you. Everyone is different.

### **Additional recommendations**

- Eat a variety of nutrient-rich food and beverages from the basic food groups (proteins, fats, and carbohydrates).
- To lose weight (when appropriate), reduce portion sizes but still eat a variety of foods. To gain weight, increase portion sizes and enjoy a variety of different foods.
- Choose healthy carbohydrates over refined carbs. For example, eat lots of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, oatmeal, brown rice, etc. and stay away from white bread, white rice, snack-pack treats, regular soft drinks, processed starchy, sugary, and fatty foods, etc. Use refined carbs as occasional treats.
- Counting calories. Don't obsess by counting every calorie, but be aware that your body's energy requirements are higher than what is provided by many diets. Use the following as a guideline. (From the University of California Wellness Letter. October 2002)

<b>Activity level</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very light	1,910	2,465
Light	2,225	3,020
Moderate	2,350	3,260
Heavy	2,800	3,975

Source: *Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders* [www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)