

Healthy Steps to a Nutritious Diet

From your friends at Blue Care Network

What's a good, nutritious diet?

Every five years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services update their dietary guidelines. The latest update offers the following advice to healthy adults about how much they should be eating each day:

Carbohydrates: 45 percent to 65 percent of daily calories

Fats: 20 percent to 35 percent of calories

Protein: 10 percent to 35 percent of calories (Adult men 50 and younger need more, while adult women need less.)

Sugars: No more than 25 percent of calories from added sugars such as soft drinks and candy

Here's how to translate these percentages into meals:

- Carbohydrates can be potatoes, or they can be whole grains, legumes, certain vegetables and fruits. Carbohydrates are fiber-rich vegetables (spinach, winter squash, Brussels sprouts, artichoke hearts and mushrooms) and high-fiber fruits (prunes, raspberries and blackberries).
- Fats are in meat, or they're what the meat is cooked in. Cut down on high-fat meat and avoid fried foods. Eat lean cuts of meat and dairy products. Avoid snack foods and baked goods that list saturated fats as one of the first ingredients. Also avoid those made from "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" or "vegetable shortening." These are sources of trans fatty acids, which increase bad cholesterol and lower good cholesterol levels, putting you at risk for diseases.
- For protein, don't only think meat. Protein can be found in poultry and fish. Whole grain products that are made of wheat, oat or barley flours are rich in protein, vitamins and minerals. Beans, lentils and split peas are also high in protein, as are low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on sugar. Avoid foods and beverages with added sugars, including corn syrups and other sweeteners. Beverages sweetened with "real fruit juice" are not as good as eating the fruit itself.

The best diet is one that is varied, well-balanced and includes the basic four food groups: fruits and vegetables, meats (leaner is better), dairy (try low-fat), and whole grains. Watch the fat, cholesterol, sugar and salt, and eat everything in moderation.

A tennis ball,
a hockey puck
and a deck of
cards...

What do these have to do with nutrition?

This trio can help you manage food portion sizes.

- A portion of fruits or vegetables the size of a tennis ball equals one serving.
- A half bagel the size of a hockey puck represents one serving of the grain food group.
- Three ounces of protein is the size of a deck of playing cards.

Here are some other tips to help keep food portions in line:

- For a balanced meal think "two-thirds, one-third." Vegetables, grains and fruits should fill two-thirds of the plate – meat, poultry or fish the remaining one-third.
- Read food labels especially the number of servings. A single can or carton of food may look like a single serving, but, in fact, may serve two or more. Use the extra portions for leftovers.
- For better portion control, use a smaller plate. Your portions will look hearty, but you'll meet the portion requirements.

Recipe

Berry Cheesecake with Gingersnaps

Ingredients

- 2 ounces fat-free cream cheese
- ¼ cup low-fat ricotta cheese
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon orange peel
- 2 teaspoons orange juice
- 1-½ cups blueberries, blackberries and/or raspberries
- 2 gingersnap cookies, broken

Instructions

1. In a medium mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, ricotta cheese, sugar, orange peel and orange juice. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth.
2. Cover and chill for at least 4 hours or up to 24 hours.
3. To serve, spoon the fruit into dessert dishes. Top with the cream cheese mixture and sprinkle with the broken cookies.

Nutritional information

Calories	134
Saturated fat	0 g
Protein	8 g
Carbohydrates	21 g
Sodium	74 mg
Cholesterol	32 mg

It's a fact...

Eat the rainbow

Fruits and vegetables can be organized by the colors of the rainbow. Each color gives us different nutrients. These nutrients strengthen your immune system and help prevent disease and aging. They also lower your risk for certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and eye diseases.

Here's what else colorful fruits and vegetables can do for you:

- Red fruits and vegetables (tomatoes, red peppers, beets) improve memory and maintain heart and urinary tract health.
- Blue/purple fruits and vegetables (plums, eggplant) fight aging, improve memory and improve urinary tract health.
- Green fruits and vegetables (lettuce, honeydew) help maintain good vision and help build strong bones and teeth.
- Yellow/orange fruits and vegetables (oranges, carrots) improve heart health and strengthen the immune system.
- White fruits and vegetables (white peaches, white radishes) lower cholesterol levels and improve heart health.

Resources

Are you ready to get on the road to good health?

Join BCN's Weigh to Go™ program. It's designed to help adults overcome the challenges of achieving a healthy weight and physical activity level. Find out if you're eligible by calling the Michigan Institute for Health Enhancement at 866-648-3265 or enroll online at miteam.org.

The Blues also have a partnership with Weight Watchers® that gives you special pricing on registration and plans. Call 888-335-6746 for more information.

Tips to live by...

Jump-start your healthier eating by taking these small steps

- Add a serving of fruits or veggies to meals, like a handful of strawberries or a half cup of broccoli.
- Read nutrition labels. Choose products low in saturated and trans fats.
- Buy cereals and breads made with whole grains.
- Try dishes that contain less meat and more veggies, grains and pasta.
- Cut down the size of meat servings. Instead of 5 ounces of chicken, have a stir-fry with 2 ounces of chicken and 1-½ cups of veggies.
- Sprinkle fruit or nuts into low-fat yogurt.