

EAT HEALTHY

Focus on meeting your nutritional needs rather than trying to count calories. Your body has essential (necessary) requirements: essential amino acids (protein building blocks), essential vitamins and minerals, essential fats, and water. Many Americans are both obese and malnourished. Instead of the old 4 food groups and current food pyramid, think: 1) Protein (meat, fish, nuts, beans, eggs, milk), 2) Vitamins and minerals (fruits and vegetables and get 9 servings a day), 3) Fats (vegetable oils and coupled with most protein sources), 4) Carbohydrate (complex like bread or simple like sugar).

Eat whole foods (as minimally processed and close to nature as possible). Choose water instead of soda. Avoid processed, bleached, refined ingredients and those you can't pronounce. Food coloring and added flavorings (artificial and natural) are likely to be of no good and may be harmful. It is important you understand the food label, especially as cigarette manufacturers branch out into food processing.

Healthy bread can be difficult to find. Whole wheat bread should not have caramel color or dough conditioners. "Enriched" or "fortified" usually means the nutritional value was stripped away in the first place. Whole grain complex carbohydrates have higher nutritional value than refined white: flour, sugar, rice, pasta, cereal and bread.

Sugar names include: Glucose, Sucrose, other chemicals ending in -ose, corn and other syrups, monosaccharide, disaccharide, and many others. Sugar stimulates insulin release, which promotes fat storage. While it is best to avoid added sugar in foods, they are still preferable to artificial sweeteners.

Essential fat is essential to good health. Processed fats are artificially saturated (hydrogenated) so that the final product remains homogenous (mixed and uniform). The oil in your peanut butter and other products should separate out "like oil and water". Bad fats that increase your risk of heart disease include: refined polyunsaturated oils (ex corn, safflower), saturated fats (animal fats and refined vegetable oils), and trans fats (found in packaged snacks).

- 1) Eat breakfast. Overweight people tend to skip breakfast or eat a small amount of poor quality food.
- 2) Make lunch bigger than dinner.
- 3) To lose weight, instead of the traditional "meat, vegetable, starch", try "protein, vegetable, vegetable" for dinner.
- 4) Eat small frequent nutritious meals, but don't snack on empty calories (especially after dinner). Empty calories are high in carbohydrates and low on vitamins and minerals.
- 5) Remember to exercise regularly (20-30 minutes most days).

For additional information on this and other health issues, visit: MedlinePlus.gov