



FOUNDATIONS OF FOOD: A GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING

Good health is closely tied to the food we eat. Consuming food not only fuels our bodies with energy and essential nutrients, it also fosters a sense of belonging and community by connecting us with the natural world around us and the experiences shared with others during meals. Unfortunately, access to quality food is harder to come by these days, leading to an increase in chronic health conditions.

ENERGY



Food is our primary source of energy. It gives us fuel to carry out daily activities like walking, digesting our food, and engaging in exercise. Without this essential energy supply, our bodies would struggle to function efficiently.

NUTRITION



In addition to powering our activities, food gives our bodies essential nutrients they otherwise can't produce on their own. These nutrients are crucial for proper cell function, ensuring optimal performance of organs, such as the heart, lungs, liver, and brain.

Key components of nutrition include:

Macronutrients: The “building blocks” proteins, fats, and carbohydrates found in foods are essential for energy production, growth and repair.

Micronutrients: The “tiny helpers” in our food are vitamins and minerals, which help our cells and organ systems stay healthy and work properly.

Phytonutrients: The “super hero” molecules we get from plants provide beneficial compounds for our well-being.

CONNECTION



Food isn't just about nutrition; it also fosters connection among people. Cooking and sharing meals with family, food-centric cultural traditions, and celebratory gatherings highlight this aspect of food. It brings people together, reflects our cultural identity, and reinforces our profound connection to the earth and each other.

FOOD IS



HERE ARE SIX WAYS TO START MAKING HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES TODAY:



PRIORITIZE WHOLE FOODS

Whole foods, including fish and seafood, meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains (brown rice, quinoa), nuts and seeds, are minimally processed with few ingredients, offering a rich array of nutrients. Conversely, processed foods, including sodas, packaged snacks (chips, cookies), ready-to-eat meals, and processed meats (hot dogs, sausages), undergo significant alteration with additives, preservatives, and added sugars or fats, making them less nutritious and more detrimental to our health.



FOCUS ON PROTEIN

Proteins are essential for cell repair, muscle growth, immune function, and blood sugar regulation. Aim for a balanced diet that includes a mix of animal and plant proteins, preferably from organic, grass-fed, and wild sources, which are typically lower in toxins and richer in omega-3 fats. Try to incorporate protein into every meal and snack.



EMPHASIZE QUALITY FATS

Include anti-inflammatory fats found in fish, nuts, certain oils, and seeds in your daily diet. Avoid trans and hydrogenated fats, often found in fried foods and commercial baked goods, while increasing your omega-3 intake from both fish and plant sources. Balancing fat intake is crucial for reducing the risk of chronic diseases and inflammation.



BOOST FIBER INTAKE

Fiber is a part of plant foods that our bodies can't digest, but it's crucial for keeping our digestive system running smoothly. It helps us feel full and supports overall health. The best way to meet the recommended intake (25g women and 38 grams men) is by eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes daily.



REDUCE SUGAR INTAKE

Consuming too much sugar from candies, sugary drinks, processed foods, refined grains like breads and pasta, and desserts can lead to weight gain, increase the risk of diabetes and cause energy crashes. Limit sugary treats and drinks, instead opting for fruits and water.



EMBRACE PHYTONUTRIENTS

Plant-based foods are rich in phytonutrients, natural compounds that are beneficial to our cells. Even small amounts of phytonutrients, found in foods like green leafy vegetables, grapes, and green tea, can greatly benefit our health. Make it a habit to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day to maximize your phytonutrient intake.