



Healthier you

The basics of nutrition

It's easy to get confused by diets. Should you cut carbohydrates? Eat low fat? Stop eating gluten? The truth is, no one diet will work for everyone. But here's some basic nutrition information that applies to many people.

What's in a balanced diet

Macronutrients are the basic, structural elements of food. Food is made up of three macronutrients:

- Protein
- Carbohydrates (carbs)
- Fat

Different foods have different macros. You can see the make-up of a food item by checking its food label or looking it up on a program like MyFitnessPal.*

Each macronutrient serves a different purpose. And your body needs all three to function the way it should. So strive for quality macronutrients and balance. But what role do each of them play? Let's take a closer look.

Protein

Protein is the building block of your body. Each time you move or expend energy, you break down your body's tissue. You need protein to build it back up. This helps you create and maintain lean muscle. Protein also helps you feel full longer. Get protein from meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, soy and dairy.

Everyone's body is unique and the amount of protein needed can vary. But most experts agree you should get about 0.8 – 1.0 gram of protein per kilogram of your body weight per day.** So take your weight and multiply it by 0.36 to get an approximate amount. You can use the size of your palm to estimate one serving of protein.¹

¹How to calculate protein intake. WikiHow. Accessed June 2018.

*MyFitnessPal is a registered trademark of MyFitnessPal, Inc.

**Recommendations vary based on age, lifestyle and health history

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide your body with quick and easy fuel, especially during intense activity. Sadly, many carbohydrates come from low quality, processed sources. And if you eat too many carbs, you may experience a spike in your blood sugar. This can lead to high insulin levels and weight gain.

So it's important to seek out quality carbs that contain fiber, vitamins and minerals. The fiber will help your body break down the carbohydrates more slowly. And this will make you feel full longer and provide you with more sustainable energy. Get carbohydrates from vegetables, unrefined grains and fruit.

Again, people may need different amounts of carbohydrates. But most experts agree you should get about 120 – 150 grams of carbohydrates each day or about 30 – 45 grams per meal.* You can estimate a serving by choosing a portion no larger than your fist.

Fat

Fat gets a bad rap. Many people think that eating fat makes you overweight. But fat is the body's main energy source. And it helps keep your brain, skin and hair healthy. Fat also helps support your immune system, insulates your organs and helps your body absorb vitamins A, D, E and K. But, like with carbs, quality matters.

High quality fats can help curb your sugar cravings and give your body clean fuel to burn. Low quality fats can be a source of inflammation. So if you're already prone to inflammation, eating unhealthy fats can be like pouring gasoline on a fire.

Your body needs both saturated and unsaturated fats. So what should you reach for? And which ones should you avoid?

- **Healthy saturated fats.** Coconut oil, sustainably sourced palm oil, grass fed meat and dairy, pastured poultry.

- **Unhealthy saturated fats.** Saturated fats from unhealthy animals, any fats with a label stating it's been "refined".
 - **Healthy unsaturated fats.** Salmon, sardines, pastured poultry, grass fed meat, egg yolks, walnuts, olives and olive oil, avocado and avocado oil, almonds.
 - **Unhealthy unsaturated fats.** Vegetable oils, canola oil
- Nutritionists suggest people get about 10 - 20 grams of fat per meal or 50 - 80 grams per day.* You can estimate this by using the size of your thumb for liquid fats and a small palm for solid fats.

Sugar

Lots of us love sugar. And many "low fat" food products are high in sugar so they taste good. But sugar can create a few problems for us. If you regularly eat sugar it can:

- Add to inflammation in the body
- Lead to faster aging and chronic disease
- Increase hunger

Sugar is actually an anti-nutrient. So your body has to use energy to process it. But sugar doesn't give back any nutrients to your body. And this can leave your body starved for nutrients and keep you feeling hungry. Now, this doesn't apply to natural sugar that comes in a whole food form (like in fruit). Those sugars are packed with healthy, natural nutrients that leave you satisfied.

We know that sweets tend to have high sugar content. But sugar can hide in sneaky places. You might be surprised to find it in your bread, condiments, crackers, pasta, granola bars, soups, popcorn, skim milk and low-fat dairy products.

And what about sugar substitutes? Some of these, like Splenda®** and aspartame have been linked with weight gain.² And they may make you crave more sweets. If you really want something sweet, consider fruit, raw honey, coconut sugar, stevia or xylitol. (Xylitol can be toxic to animals, so be sure to keep it away from pets.)

²Sifferlin, Alexandra. [Artificial sweeteners are linked to weight gain — not weight loss.](#) Time. Accessed February 2018.

*Recommendations vary based on age, lifestyle and health history

**Splenda® is a registered trademark of Heartland Food Products Group, LLC.



Micronutrients

Macronutrients are the large, energy-giving calories and elements in our food. Micronutrients are the vitamins, minerals, trace elements, phytochemicals and antioxidants we need for good health. These include:

- **Vitamin D** — Crucial for brain health and immunity
- **Omega 3s** — Decrease inflammation
- **B vitamins** — Support energy production
- **Vitamin C** — Prevents damage to the body and supports it against stress
- **Magnesium** — Supports sleep and muscle relaxation
- **Antioxidants and Phytochemicals** — The protective agents found in the pigments of food

But can't you just take a multi-vitamin and call it a day? It's best to get these micronutrients from your food. Many of their benefits are lost when you take them in pill form. And it's possible to consume toxic amounts if you take them on their own. So vitamins should be taken under a doctor's guidance.

Talk to an expert

The recommendations in this article are pretty general. Your age, lifestyle and health might mean you have different needs. So it's a good idea to talk with a doctor before changing your diet.

You might also want to speak with a registered dietician (RD). You'll get personalized advice that's tailored to your unique needs. And an RD can help you look at your health metrics and lifestyle to find what works for you.

We hope you find a happy, active, nutrition-loving version of yourself. Because living the kind of life you want sounds pretty healthy to us.



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