

Tips for a prudent diet

Patients often have questions about what to include or exclude from their diet. Although there is no single set of guidelines, there are some general principles that are integral to a balanced diet. A general recommendation is to eat a healthy diet, which is full of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, with a limited amount of red meat. For more specifics on exactly what you should or shouldn't eat, I would refer you to the numerous books available on the topic in your local library or bookstore. In addition, I give patients the option to consult with one of the registered dietitians in our Outpatient Department. In addition to a general balanced diet, they also have knowledge and expertise in many specialized diets, including diets modified in carbohydrates (for diabetics), caloric content (for diabetics and overweight people), fat content (for those with high cholesterol or triglycerides), fiber content (for those with diverticulitis, for example), plus other types of diets. Please ask your doctor any other questions you may have concerning your diet.

For the vast majority of adults, however, the following guidelines would be helpful:

Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and a limited amount of red meats. Get at least 5 (more is even better) servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Some helpful tips for achieving this goal include:

- 1) Make fruits and vegetables part of every meal. Frozen or canned can be used when fresh isn't available.**
- 2) Put fruit on your cereal.**
- 3) Eat vegetables as snacks.**
- 4) Have a bowl of fruit out all the time for yourself (and your kids) to snack from.**

Cut down "bad" fats (trans- fatty acids and saturated fats) and consume "good" fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats like olive oil and canola oil). Tips for achieving this goal include:

- 1) Choose chicken, fish, or beans instead of red meat and cheese.**
- 2) Cook with oils that contain a lot of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, such as olive or canola oil.**
- 3) Choose margarines that do not have partially hydrogenated oils. Soft margarines (especially squeeze margarines) have less trans-fatty acids than stick margarines.**
- 4) Eat fewer baked goods that are store-made and contain partially hydrogenated fats (such as many types of crackers, cookies, and cupcakes.)**
- 5) When eating at fast food restaurants, choose for yourself (as well as your family) items such as broiled chicken.**

Get enough folate every day (400 micrograms). Tips for achieving this goal include:

- 1) Take a daily multivitamin containing 400 micrograms of folate.**
- 2) Eat breakfast cereal that is fortified with folate. Check the label to be sure.**
- 3) Eat fruits and vegetables that are rich in folate, such as oranges, orange juice, and green leafy vegetables.**

Avoid excessive alcohol intake. Tips for achieving this goal include:

- 1) Choose non-alcoholic beverages, like juices and sodas at meals and parties.**
- 2) Avoid occasions centered around alcohol.**
- 3) Avoid making alcohol an essential part of family gatherings.**

William C. Liaw, M. D.

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