

Ways to Eat Healthy

By Allen Smith, eHow User



Finding ways to ensure you're eating healthy seems to be a never-ending challenge. Consumers are bandied about between the latest fad diet, to fasting, to the latest craze in supplements. Eventually, they always return to the tried and true recommendations of registered dietitians - moderate portions of [foods](#) from all the major food groups.

The Food Pyramid

Long before there was an Atkins or South Beach diet, the United States Department of Agriculture published its first set of dietary guidelines. The original set of guidelines was published in 1894, then revamped in the 1960s with an increased concern over the increased incidence of heart disease. The original food pyramid emphasized eating from five food groups: milk/meat, cereals, vegetables/fruits, fats and sugars. Later, the pyramid emphasized four food groups and was modified again in 1992. The current food pyramid consists of six food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat & beans and oils.

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American consumers are always anxious to find a quick fix. However, registered dietitians emphasize the importance of eating as part of a lifestyle, instead of a temporary craze. The USDA food pyramid is a good place to start. It recommends that adults eat 3 oz of whole grain foods, dark green vegetables, a variety of fresh, frozen and canned fruit, low-fat or fat-free dairy products and lean meats and poultry that are baked, broiled or grilled. Dietitians also recommend that you eat a wide variety of foods from the pyramid, eat plenty of foods containing calcium and find a balance between the amount of food you eat and what you need, based on your daily physical activity.

Taking Back Control of Your Diet

The most difficult times to follow these guidelines are when you're eating out or in unfamiliar circumstances. Eating out doesn't mean that you have to give up all of the foods that you enjoy. Instead, take control of your diet. When eating out at restaurants, ask the kitchen to put the butter, sour cream, salad dressings and other condiments on the side instead of directly on your food. Once it's delivered to your table, you can add as little or as much as you like. Learn how to swap high-fat foods for those lower in fat and cholesterol. For instance, instead of ice cream for dessert, try a delicious sorbet, sherbet or low-fat yogurt. Exchange pasta with cheese sauce for pasta with vegetables in marinara sauce. Cut out the bacon, hot dogs and regular ground beef and replace them with lean ham, Canadian bacon, chicken, turkey or fish. Finally, replace regular salad dressings with reduced calorie dressings, lemon juice or wine and vinegar dressings. Another great way to ensure that you're not eating more calories than you need is to be able to accurately estimate portion sizes. One cup of pasta is about the size of an adult fist. One half cup of grapes is the same size as a light bulb and 2 tbsp of salad dressing are approximately the same size as a ping pong ball.

Resources

- [USDA Food Pyramid](#)