KAISER PERMANENTE®

Good eating guidelines

Make each bite count

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) can help you make smart food choices for a healthier life.

How much should I eat?

The amount you should eat depends on your age, activity level, and whether you're trying to gain, maintain, or lose weight. The USDA's Choose MyPlate can help you pick the foods and amounts that are right for you.

Look for the nutrition facts label on packaged foods to tell you how many calories, fat grams, and other nutrients are in each serving of food.

USDA recommendations

Aim to follow these key USDA recommendations each day, based on a 2,000-calorie diet:

Balance your calories.
Pay attention to actual portion sizes. A serving may be less than you think, and many of us are eating more calories than we realize.

Drink more water.
Choose water instead of sugary drinks. You might be surprised how much sugar is in your favorite sodas and juices.

Vary your veggies.
Get 5 servings of colorful veggies. A serving equals 1/2 cup of most raw or cooked vegetables, 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables, or 6 ounces of vegetable juice.

Focus on fruits.
Choose 3 servings of fresh, frozen, or dried fruits. A serving is 1 small piece of fruit, 1 cup of berries or melon, 1/2 cup of other fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned without added sugar), or 1/4 cup of dried fruit.

Dig into dairy.
Eat 3 servings a day of low-fat or nonfat dairy, such as milk, cheese or yogurt. A serving is 8 ounces of milk, 1 cup of yogurt, or 1 1/2 ounces of cheese (about the size of 2 dice). If you don't

or can't drink milk, choose lactose-free products (such as soy milk and soy yogurt). Find out if you're getting enough calcium in your diet.

Get a helping of whole grains.
Eat 6 servings of grains. At least half the grains you eat should be unrefined, whole grains (such as whole wheat breads, whole-grain cereal, and brown rice). A serving is 1 slice of bread, 1 ounce dry cereal, or 1/2 cup cooked pasta, rice, or cereal.

Go lean with protein.
Eat 5 1/2 ounces of lean meat, chicken, or fish. You can also serve up the equivalent amount of beans, tofu, or other protein-rich alternatives to meat.

Chew the right fats.
Choose foods low in saturated fats and cholesterol and avoid trans fat (also called partially hydrogenated oil). Most of the fats you eat should be plant-based, found in olive or canola oil, nuts, and seeds. Keep total fat intake between 20 and 35 percent of your total daily calories. Learn about good and bad fats.

Be selective about sugar.
Look for foods and beverages low in added sugar. Other words for sugar you might see on food labels include sucrose, glucose, corn syrup, and fructose.

Reduce sodium and increase potassium.
Eating less than 2,300 mg of sodium (about 1 teaspoon of salt) per day may reduce the risk of high blood pressure. Foods high in potassium (such as potatoes, beans, tomato products, and bananas) balance some of sodium's effects on blood pressure. Adults 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.

Drink alcohol in moderation.
Those who choose to drink alcoholic beverages should do so sensibly and in moderation — up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.

Prevent food poisoning.
Wash your hands after handling raw foods to avoid spreading bacteria and germs. Keep raw meat away from other foods, and always cook meats to the proper internal temperature. Be sure to keep food surfaces (counters, dishes, cutting boards) clean. Learn more about safe food handling.

Now that you know how much to put on your plate, set healthy eating goals and make a plan for success.

Related links

Are you eating more calories than you think?
Essential nutrients for every day
Nutrition for kids and teens
Nutrition for older adults
Nutrition for pregnant women

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