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How to Eat Healthy(er)

Eating is an essential part of our everyday lives. It can be a source of energy, enjoyment and health. Your current eating habits and routines, physical activity, and stress management have likely developed over the course of many years. Learning to eat healthfully, exercise regularly, and better manage your stress will not be an overnight process. There are bound to be "steps back" along the way. Remember, change that is gained slowly over time is the most sustainable. There is an ideal way of eating, but the question you should ask yourself is, "How can I become healthy(er)?"

1. **Start with breakfast and eat five small, low fat meals a day.** Every 3-4 hours.
2. **Eat your fruit and vegetables:** forget the "Five a Day" posters you've seen. 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables is the current recommendation for maintaining and achieving long lasting health. Specifically focus on dark green leafy vegetables, which contain the highest levels of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.
3. **Choose whole foods over processed foods.** A whole food is a food that your grandmother would recognize, or something that you can picture growing. Include the following whole foods into your daily routine in this predominance: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, quality proteins, nuts, legumes, seeds and minimally processed dairy.
4. **Superfoods:** Of the whole food family, these foods pack the best nutritional punch: Legumes (beans), spirulina (blue-green algae), blueberries, broccoli, oats, quinoa ("keenwa"), oranges, pumpkin, salmon, soy beans, spinach, kale, tea (green or black), tomatoes, turkey, walnuts and yogurt.
5. **Read labels.** There are three simple rules for choosing a healthier food. First, you should be able to pronounce everything on the label; second, no high fructose corn syrup or corn syrup solids; and third, if the label has 'hydrogenated' listed on it, choose another item. Whole Foods, PCC and Trader Joes do not allow the second two items in products they carry in their stores.
6. **Remove or reduce vices.** Abstain, or greatly reduce, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, drugs and tobacco.
7. **Hydration.** Space your water consumption out across the day to ensure you are properly hydrated; drinking a minimum of 6 glasses each day. Replace sports drinks, pop and diet pop with water. Enjoy seltzer or sparkling water if you like bubbles and need extra flavor. Lemon, orange or lime slices nicely flavor water (keep a pitcher in the frig).
8. **Get moving.** Make daily activity a priority. If you like walking, make a habit of it and challenge yourself by purchasing a pedometer.

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9. **Always pair a carbohydrate with a protein or fat serving.** Carbohydrates digest and absorb more quickly than protein. Fats are the slowest to process. During meals most people combine carbohydrates with protein or fat servings. Rarely will a person sit down and eat a bowl of pasta (carbohydrate) without adding butter (fat) or marinara sauce with meat (protein and fat). Carbohydrates are more likely to be consumed by themselves as snack time. If you eat just an apple (carbohydrate) your body will digest and absorb it leading to a quick spike in blood sugar and a quick burst of energy. If you add 12 raw almonds (protein/ fat) or a single serving of string cheese (protein/ fat), the combination will be digested and absorbed more slowly, leading to longer sustained energy.

Choose one item from each of these lists for a healthy well-balanced snack.

Carbohydrate List

1 piece fruit
4-5 pcs dried fruit
1 whole wheat piece of bread/ toast
½ whole wheat pita
¼ C Go Lean Cereal
¼ C high fiber cereal
1 C raw vegetables
5-6 whole wheat crackers

Protein List

1 svg nuts: 12 almonds, 9 pecans, 3 walnuts
Yogurt (cascade fresh nonfat w/ fruit)
2 Tsp nut butter
2 T hummus
8 oz milk or soy milk, nonfat or light
2-3 oz meat or tuna
1 oz cheese
¾ C cottage cheese

With this in mind how can you eat healthy(er)? If you are eating three meals a day, try to increase the amount of meals to four and sustain this for a week. If you wish to increase the amount of fruit you eat, then make a goal of adding one piece a day for a week and then increase from there. If you haven't eaten breakfast for the last ten years then make a goal of eating breakfast twice next week and then see if you can increase from there. You get the picture; start slow and be consistent.



Angela Pifer is a Certified Nutritionist, with a MS in nutrition from Bastyr University, in private practice, specializing in food sensitivities, emotional eating, digestive conditions, sports nutrition & weight loss. She founded **Nutrition Northwest Co** in 2005; the premier provider of sound nutrition and wellness advice in the Northwest with offices in Seattle and Kirkland. Angela has a unique approach to helping her patients create new healthier habits: offering customized nutrition programs that inspire & educate along with a high degree of support & accountability to help them become fit & fabulous from the inside out. www.NutritionNorthwest.com

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