

Eating Healthy

Smart nutrition is about making the right choices—about eating that enhances your health and well-being, bringing you more energy and vitality.

Nutritionally Dense Food vs. Empty Calories

Eating nutritionally dense food is the best way to get the most out of your calories. These foods are relatively low in calories, but high in nutrition, so they can help you maintain a healthy weight while giving you a good dose of vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber.

At the same time, you'll want to cut down your intake of foods with "empty calories"—those that have high calorie counts with little nutritional benefit. These foods often get their extra calories from fats and refined sugars. That's why a piece of fruit in the morning will do you more good than a sugary pastry—at a fraction of the calories.

GREEN LIGHT FOODS

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are a natural choice for nutritionally dense foods, so you can be generous in serving up these highly nourishing treats. In fact, according to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov, fruits and vegetables together should make up half of your plate at any given meal—about 30 percent vegetables and 20 percent fruit. You can choose a diverse selection of colors to add variety in both flavor and nutrition.

Whole Grain Foods

Grains should also account for a sizable portion of your plate—about 30 percent. The USDA recommends that whole grains—those that contain cereal germ, endosperm, and bran—make up at least half of those grains. Typically, if the ingredient lists "whole wheat," "whole meal," or "whole corn" as the

first ingredient, the product is a whole-grain food item.

Lean Sources of Protein

Lean protein is important to a smart diet—and should account for about 20 percent of your plate. There are many good sources of lean protein, including:

- Lean meats (chicken, turkey, beef, pork, etc.)
- Seafood (fish, shellfish, etc.)
- Soy products (tofu, veggie burgers, soy beverages, etc.)
- Eggs
- Beans and peas
- Nuts and seeds (these tend to be high in fat, so use only small amounts per day)

Dairy and Other Calcium-Rich Foods

Dairy products can be a good source of both calcium and protein, but low-fat and no-fat dairy products are the most nutritionally dense. Other calcium-fortified food sources include cereals, breads, and some juices, as well as soy, rice, and nut beverages fortified with calcium. Dark leafy vegetables, like turnip greens, kale, Chinese cabbage, and mustard greens, are additional sources.

Water

Drinking plenty of water is part of good nutrition, but foods like raw fruit and vegetables can also help keep you hydrated. It's important to realize that your body can have trouble distinguishing hunger from thirst pangs, so being well hydrated can often keep you from eating too much.



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