



What is a healthy diet?

Tips for a healthy diet: there is a range of differing approaches to ensuring a balanced and healthy diet. Some of the key approaches are outlined below.

Western approaches

Western nutritionists advocate a balance of protein, carbohydrate, fruit, vegetables and fiber, plus a balanced intake of vitamins and minerals. Standard recommendations include:

- Eating five portions of fruit and vegetables every day
- Cutting down intake of caffeine and alcohol; and increasing intake of water
- Cutting down saturated fats such as that found in red meat and cheese; and increasing intake of essential fatty acids found in oily fish, nuts and seeds
- Decreasing consumption of processed foods and additives such as colorings, preservatives and flavorings; and increasing consumption of fresh foods and whole grains
- Cutting down or cutting out use of added salt and sugar in cooking and on other prepared foods - better to use honey or fruit sugar in the place of ordinary (refined) sugars
- Consuming organic and free-range foods where possible

Eastern nutrition

The Eastern or Asian approach to nutrition is different from the Western approach. Here the focus is on eating seasonal foods and ensuring a balance according to their properties. As such foods tend to be classified in accordance with their warming or cooling properties.

- Warm/warming foods (to be eaten in winter) include root and other vegetables grown below ground (such as turnips and carrots); pulses; meats; and spices such as ginger and cinnamon. Warm foods should be boiled, grilled or fried.
- Cool/cooling foods (to be eaten in summer) include lots of salads (lettuce, watercress and radishes); vegetables grown above ground (such as peas and beans); and soft fruits. Cool foods should be raw, cold, fresh or refrigerated.

Eating foods that are out of season and have been imported - for example eating tropical fruits in winter - is considered unwise.

If too many cool foods are eaten in the cold months, they will cool the body making it more susceptible to 'cold' diseases such as poor circulation or colds. Similarly, eating lots of 'hot' foods in summer will overheat the body and may aggravate conditions such as some skin diseases or liver problems.

Naturopathy

Naturopathy advises similar food groups to the Western approach, but also contains an element of good eating habits and cooking techniques. Naturopaths also recommend certain foods to combat specific illnesses.

Naturopaths recommend the following eating habits to aid digestion:

- Eat slowly and chew food properly
- Eat in a calm and quiet environment (not in front of the TV or at your desk)
- Focus on your food - don't do other things, such as reading, while eating
- Don't drink water or other beverages while eating, as it can dilute digestive juices in the stomach
- Always finish a meal with a small part of your stomach feeling slightly empty
- Avoid overeating and don't eat large or heavy meals in the evening

In food preparation, naturopaths advise the following:

- Eat as much raw food as possible and cook food as little as possible
- Steam food, rather than frying or boiling, as this preserves vitamins and minerals within the food
- Use stainless steel or enamel pans when cooking
- Decrease intake of processed foods and increase intake of fresh foods
- Use natural seasonings, spices and flavorings to enhance the taste of your food, instead of substances with salt, or artificial flavorings such as ketchup

Should I see my physician?

If you are experiencing severe problems with fatigue, irritability, poor concentration etc, you may benefit from trying the tips above and reading up on nutrition.

If your symptoms persist or get worse, it's important to go and see your physician who will look into possible underlying causes. They may suggest you speak to a qualified nutritional therapist, who will be able to tailor a diet and supplement program to your individual needs.

Where can I go for further support?

If you are an educator from one of the districts that have signed up to this service and you wish to speak to a counselor, you can call the toll free Educator Support Line on 1-877-876-4327.