

# SIX TIPS FOR PROPER NUTRITION



**N**utrition is the science that studies the relationship between diet (the food we eat) and health (how our bodies use food as fuel for growth and daily activities). The science of nutrition attempts to understand how and why specific dietary aspects influence our health. The first step toward a healthier lifestyle is to understand how our diet affects our health. Once we have this base, or foundation, we can then begin to find the proper balance in our diet to attain proper nutrition and the exercise needed to personally achieve proper physical health.

Deficiencies, excesses, and imbalances in diet can negatively impact health, which may lead to diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and other debilitating maladies. Many common diseases and ailments can often be avoided or prevented with proper nutrition and exercise.

**There are seven main types of nutrients that the human body requires in order to maintain proper health. Those major nutrients are carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water.**

It is important for all seven of these nutrients to be consumed on a daily basis in order to build and maintain health. Poor health is generally caused by imbalanced nutrition, either through excess or deficiency and a lack of

exercise, which, in turn, negatively affects the entire body and all of its functions.

While there are a myriad of published ways to achieve proper nutrition within our daily diet, almost all of them suggest at least six common tips.

**1 Don't skip meals.** Eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When you skip a meal, your body recognizes that it doesn't have food to convert into energy. At that point your body goes into "survival" mode, slowing your metabolism and storing excess food or glucose as FAT. If your body is routinely fed, it will increase your metabolism, breaking down the fat since it thinks it doesn't need it anymore.

**2 Drink water.** Water is essential to achieving a healthy diet. Avoid soda and sweetened drinks. The Mayo Clinic recommends that men consume 3 liters (about 13 cups) and women should consume at least 2 liters (about 9 cups) of water per day.

**3 Eat lean protein.** Aside from water, protein is the most prevalent material in your body. Research also indicates that increased dietary protein (not necessarily a "high protein diet") may reduce the risk of heart disease by reducing "bad" LDL Cholesterol and raising "good" HDL cholesterol. Protein helps keep muscles strong, and contains the building blocks for most of the enzymes in the body. These enzymes drive the metabolic rate of our bodies. Good sources of lean protein include dairy products, soy products, meat (lean meat is also an excellent source of iron), fish, and poultry.

**4 Choose more whole grains.** Most people eat less than half the amount of fiber needed each day. Choosing whole grains, such as whole wheat breads and high-fiber cereals will help you achieve your fiber needs. By increasing the intake of fiber, you reduce your risk of diseases such as colon cancer and heart disease. Fiber also makes you feel full while helping to control your blood cholesterol and blood sugar.

**5 Eat more vegetables and fruits.** A healthy diet should contain at least five servings of vegetables and fruits each day. Fruits and vegetables are naturally high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and they are low in calories. Fruit and vegetables are critical to proper nutrition. Make sure they are part of your daily menu. Fruit is also an excellent choice for in-between meal snacks too.

**6 Exercise.** 20 minutes a day, 3 days a week is the standard recommendation. Consistent exercise will decrease your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and prolong your life. Walking, swimming, jogging, weight lifting, bike riding, and aerobics are all good examples of exercises that will improve your overall health.

Vitamin and mineral supplements are also commonly suggested in addition to the steps in the above list. The suggestions listed above are general in scope and nutrition needs will vary from person to person. If you are concerned about your diet and health, please consult your physician.