

## Nutritional Fact Sheet

### **General Information**

Nutritious foods are important for our health because they provide us and our children with what is needed to build a strong body, repair body damage, and recover from sickness.

Non-nutritious foods, on the other hand, not only do not provide healthy bodies but can be the cause of health problems.

Our body uses carbs (carbohydrates) for fuel. However there are "empty" carbs meaning they give you calories and make you feel full but give you little nutrition (white breads, desserts, chips, white flour products such as pizza, noodles, crackers, etc.).

The most nutritious food is around the outer sections of the store (produce, meat, dairy). This food is the freshest with little if any preservatives added for long shelf life.

Be sure when possible to wash the appropriate fruits and vegetables in very mild soapy water. This will not only clean away dirt but wash off pesticides and dangerous bacteria.

When possible buy fruits and vegetables in season for better taste and better price. Farmers markets and roadside stands can offer good options.

Baked, boiled and grilled foods are generally healthier than fried and deep-fried.

Water is the best possible drink. You should consume two liters a day or more depending on your physical activity.

Many foods contain natural sugars such as fruits and honey. Refined sugars that are used in much of food preparation provide only that which nutritionists describe as "empty" calories. Refined sugar also drains and leaches the body of precious vitamins and minerals with NO essential nutrients. Added sugar is the single worst ingredient in the modern diet.

We all make the occasional choice to eat pizza, sugary cereal, white noodles or hotdogs, but do your body a favor by adding a salad, fruit or frozen vegetable with it.

Serving sizes make a difference. Even healthy foods become unhealthy if portions are super-sized. For instance a serving size of meat is usually about the size of a deck of cards or the palm of the hand. Half a cup of rice is considered a serving size.

A good multi-vitamin is helpful, but it will not take the place of eating nutritious food.

While sleep and exercise are not food choices, they are major contributors to a healthy body. You should get no less than 7 hours of sleep a night and exercise (even a brisk walk) five times a week for 30 minutes.

## **Fruits & Vegetables**

Fruits & Vegetables - Fresh fruits and vegetables are some of your most healthy choices. They are packed with vitamins and minerals. (Again be sure when possible to wash the appropriate fruits and vegetables in very mild soapy water. This will not only clean away dirt but wash off pesticides and dangerous bacteria.)

(We cannot comment on every fruit and vegetable, but here are a few pointers.)

Lettuce - Choose green leaf, spinach, romaine...the traditional iceberg head of lettuce has little nutritional value.

Salads - Fresh vegetables make this an extremely healthy choice. Add meat, nuts, dried fruit and seasonal garden vegetables for variety. Dressings do not tend to be as healthy; use in moderation.

Peels – Eat the peels of fruits and vegetable with edible peels. Often, much of the nutrition is found in or near the peel.

Frozen Fruits & Vegetables - While not as good as the fresh, this is a healthy choice.

X Canned Fruits & Vegetables - These have very little nutritional value....most of it is destroyed in the canning process. The fruits tend to be very high in corn syrup (sugar) as well.

## **Breads**

Breads - As a general rule the darker the bread the healthier it is for you. 100% wheat, multi-grain, rye and pumpernickel are your better choices.

Tortillas - Best choice is the wheat or multi-grain.

Pita Bread - Stick with the whole wheat variety.

X White Breads - White enriched breads have had the nutrition removed, and then the wheat is bleached before “enriching” it with vitamins and minerals because of what has already been taken out. It sounds as though you are getting something extra, but you are actually getting less than what you started out with. Eating white bread is almost like eating a piece of cake.

## **Meats**

Meats - Whether beef, poultry, fish, pork or lamb, these provide the protein that builds muscle. Protein can also be gotten through eating nuts, beans, peanuts, cheese and milk.

Fresh meat - Deer, fish, turkey and locally grown beef and pork are the best choices. Grocery store meats are often filled with steroids (to make animals grow quickly) and antibiotics (to keep the animal from sicknesses) which we also eat with the product.

Eggs - Provide a good way to get protein and can be a breakfast, lunch or dinner item.

Canned meats - Tuna, kipper, salmon, and sardines are some of your better choices. Stay away from potted meat spread, Spam, Vienna sausage and others types of processed meat that tend to be made from undesirable animal parts.

Dried Beans - Pinto beans, black beans, lentils are all good meat substitutes that provide protein and nutrition.

X Sandwich meats - These are poor choices because they are filled with preservatives to make sure the product has a long shelf life (this includes bacon). A recent study has shown that a high consumption of these can be cancer causing.

X Hotdogs - Much like the processed sandwich meats. This is not the greatest choice for healthy eating, but the better selection is beef or turkey.

### **Dairy**

Dairy - Products such as cheese, yogurt, milk, cottage cheese, and sour cream. These provide protein and calcium for your diet. Be aware that people with food allergies are often allergic to dairy products and need to eliminate or at least limit them in their diet.

Milk - Select the whole milk over 2%, 1% or skim. It provides more fat but is more nutritious for you. The other selections have greater processing and the absence of the fat makes the sugar content higher.

Yogurt - This provides good bacteria for your stomach. The down side is that it is naturally sour and all the flavors are full of sugar.

Cottage Cheese - A healthy selection but some people do not care for the taste. Sweeten it with apple sauce, a bit of jelly or a spoon full of canned fruit.

Cheese - Cheddar, Colby, Cheddar, Gouda, Mozzarella and Provolone are some of the choices available to you.

X American Sliced Cheese - This processed product is so full of additives that it is not really cheese.

### **Frozen Foods**

Frozen Fruits & Vegetables - While not as good as the fresh, this is a fairly healthy choice.

Frozen Fish - A reasonably good choice but don't select the breaded variety.

X Family dinners & meals, Hot-pockets, burritos, pizza - all these type foods are highly processed, full of additives, high in "empty" carbs and not a healthy eating choice.

### **Desserts**

Dessert - Most of these are high in sugar and "empty" carbs with little nutritional value. Most of us are not going to completely cut out desserts from our diet, so the important thing is to have them in moderation. Once or twice a week, maybe on weekends as a reward for good choices the rest of the week.

## **Drinks**

Water - This is the best drink possible for a healthy body.

Juices - Drink those that are 100% juice and remember that even these are high in natural sugars and should be drunk in moderation.

Tea - Has some health value but should be used in moderation due to caffeine. Try the herbal teas for a healthier alternative.

Coffee - Should be used on a limited basis due to the caffeine.

Gatorade - While less sugar per ounce than your average soda, it's not exactly healthy. For sicknesses that involve diarrhea or vomiting, Gatorade is very good for you by providing fluids along with electrolytes (specifically sodium, potassium and chloride.)

X Soda - Sugared water with flavor and carbonation added. These are exceptionally high in sugar and unhealthy.

X Diet Drinks - Artificial sweeteners trigger insulin, which sends your body into fat storage mode and leads to weight gain. They keep your preference for sugar at a high level, and encourage you to seek out sweet foods.

X Red Bull, Monster, Rockstar, Amp - Very high in sugar and caffeine. Provides a quick boost but is also very unhealthy energy. Drinking them can lead to severe headaches, increased anxiety, insomnia and even heart issues.

X Kool-Aid, Capri Suns - Nothing more than sugar water and flavor.

## **Breakfast**

Eggs - Provide a good way to get protein.

Oats - Eating oats in your diet provides a wide range of important health benefits. Add nuts and dried fruit for additional nutrition. Avoid excess sugar or substitute honey instead.

X Cereals - Little nutritional value usually high in sugar content. Better choices are bran, shredded wheat, muesli and granola which do provide a bit of fiber in the diet.

X Bacon - Like dessert most are probably not going to completely eliminate this from their breakfast diet, but it is best to eat in moderation once or twice a week.

X Donuts, Pop-tarts, muffins - All of this "sweet" breakfast food is filled with sugar and "empty" carbs which do not provide a good nutritious breakfast.

## **Starches**

Starch is a carbohydrate used as energy for your body and is found especially in potatoes and whole grains.

Breads - Read comments on breads.

Pasta Noodles - Whole grain and veggie noodles are best choices.

Rice - White rice is produced through a refining process that removes much of the inherent nutritional factors making brown rice the more nutritional choice.

X Crackers - Not a particularly good choice especially saltines, Cheez-its, Ritz, club...a better choices are Wheat Thins, Triscuits and wheat saltines.

X Ramon Noodles - Not a healthy food due to the refining process and the MSG in the flavor packets which cause adverse reactions in some people.

X Macaroni & Cheese - Very little nutritional value.

### **Snacks**

Fruits and Vegetables - See comments about fruits and vegetables.

Dried Fruits - Nutritious, provides fiber, naturally sweet and easy for travel snacks. You can also add dried fruits to salads, oats and other foods for added nutrition.

Baby Carrots - While a little more expensive they do not have to be peeled and make an easy snack.

Nuts - A good alternative protein source and can be added to other foods. Peanuts are not true nuts although they do possess nutritional value.

Peanuts - Try to select peanuts that are low in sodium (salt).

Peanut Butter - Choice the 100% Natural Peanut Butter which is only peanuts and a small bit of salt. Brands such as Jif, Skippy and Peter Pan are filled with sugar, hydrogenated vegetable oil and salt which are not that healthy.

Nutrition & Granola Bars - Must be selective with these to truly get nutrition. Some are no more than a sugary candy bar.

Popcorn - A good alternative to chips especially if made in a hot air popper.

X Chips - The process of making chips fills them with unhealthy fats and makes for an unhealthy snack. If you are going to select chips choose baked or whole grain.

X Candy - A complete sugar rush that provides no nutrition.

### **Miscellaneous**

Canned Soups - If you choose these be sure to select the ones low in sodium (salt).

Seasonings - A good and natural way to spice up your food.

Sea Salt - The best choice of salt is sea salt.

Condiments - Mustard is natural and a good choice, ketchup is filled with sugar and a bit of tomato flavor, mayonnaise has a high fat content and should be used in moderation.

Honey - This is a more healthy way to sweeten things and can take the place of refined sugar and jellies.

X Sweetners - While refined processed sugar is not a healthy choice, many of the non-sugar alternatives are unhealthy as well and studies have shown that some of these can be cancer causing.

Provided by the Green Leaf Community

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