

Essentials

- 1. Vary your protein choices.** Eat a variety of foods from the protein food group each week, such as seafood, nuts & beans, as well as lean meat, poultry & eggs.
- 2. Cut back on sodium & empty calories from solid fats & added sugars.** Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Select fruit for dessert. Eat sugary desserts less often. Choose %100 fruit juice instead of fruit-flavored drinks.
- 3. Look out for salt (sodium) in foods you buy.** Compare sodium in foods & choose those with lower numbers. Add spices or herbs to season food without adding salt.
- 4. Watch your calcium intake.** Dairy products provide a rich source of calcium, necessary for bone health. Most are fortified with vitamin D, which helps the small intestine absorb calcium. Calcium can also be found in dark green, leafy vegetables, such as kale & collard greens, as well as in dried beans & legumes.
- 5. Limit saturated fats to less than 10% of your calories.** Saturated fats, primarily found in animal sources including red meat & whole milk dairy products, raise the low-density lipoprotein (LDL or «bad») cholesterol that increases your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). Substitute lean meats, skinless poultry, & low-fat or nonfat dairy products, fish & nuts. Other saturated fat sources include vegetable oils such as coconut oil, palm oil & foods made with these oils.
- 6. Limit trans fats to 1% of calories (2 grams per day for a 2000 calorie diet).** Trans fat raises low-density lipoprotein (LDL or «bad») cholesterol that increases your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), as well as lowering HDL, or good cholesterol. Trans fats are created by heating liquid vegetable oils in the presence of hydrogen gas, a process called hydrogenation. Primary sources of trans fat are vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, & other processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.
- 7. Choose monounsaturated fats.** Consuming monounsaturated fats results to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Primary sources are plant oils like canola oil, peanut oil, & olive oil. Other good sources are avocados; nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, & pecans; & seeds such as pumpkin & sesame seeds.

8. Include polyunsaturated fats. These include the omega3- & omega6- groups of fatty acids which your body can't make. Omega3- fatty acids are found in very few foods, primarily cold water fatty fish & fish oils. Foods rich in certain omega3- fats called EPA & DHA can reduce cardiovascular disease & improve your mood. Other sources of polyunsaturated fats are sunflower, corn, soybean, & flaxseed oils, & walnuts. It is important to know that these oils become unhealthy when heated due to the formation of free radicals, which can lead to disease.

9. Increase your omega 3 intake. Foods rich in certain omega3- fats called EPA & DHA can reduce cardiovascular disease, improve your mood & help prevent dementia. The best sources for the EPA & DHA omega3- fats are fatty fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, & some cold water fish oil supplements. Canned albacore tuna & lake trout can also be good sources.

10. Get your omegas from animal sources! You may hear a lot about getting your omega3-'s from foods rich in ALA fatty acids. Main sources are vegetable oils & nuts (especially walnuts), flax, soybeans, & tofu. Be aware that our bodies generally convert very little ALA into EPA & DHA, so you may not get as big of a benefit from these foods.

11. Eat foods rich in magnesium. Low body stores of magnesium appear to increase the risk of abnormal heart rhythms. Rich sources of magnesium include green leafy vegetables, butts & seeds, legumes, whole grains & avocados.

12. Eat potassium-rich fruits. Low potassium levels can be the cause of many cardiovascular problems. If you regularly consume a lot of caffeine (or even if you don't!), start adding potassium-rich foods into your diet. Good sources include fruits such as bananas & raisins, orange juice, potatoes, garlic, yoghurt, whole grains.

13. Don't eat too much protein. Protein is an essential part of any healthy diet, but eating too much animal-based protein such as the levels recommended in many low-carb, high-protein diets is particularly dangerous. Eating lots of protein causes calcium loss. Over time, this could lead to a decrease in bone density & osteoporosis.

14. Focus on complex carbohydrates. Foods such as baked potatoes, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain breads, & bananas boost your "feel-good" serotonin levels without a crash. They also provide plenty of fiber, so you feel full much longer.

15. Get plenty of fiber from fruits, vegetables, beans & whole grains. Fiber can help you feel full longer & lower your risk for heart disease & type 2 diabetes.

16. Calcium. The recommended daily allowance varies from 400 to 1,200 mg/day. Good sources of calcium include dairy products, leafy green vegetables, oatmeal & other grains, tofu, cabbage, summer squash, green beans, garlic, & sea vegetables. Calcium is absorbed slowly & your body cannot take in more than 500 mg at any one time.

17. Magnesium. The recommended daily allowance for magnesium is 500 to 800 mg/day. Calcium can only work when taken in conjunction with magnesium. Good sources of magnesium include leafy green vegetables, summer squash, broccoli, halibut, cucumber, green beans, celery, & a variety of seeds, including pumpkin, sunflower, sesame, & flax seeds.

18. Vitamin D. Aim for between 1,000 & 400 IU (international units) daily. You can get vitamin D from about half an hour of direct exposure to sunlight, & also from foods & supplements. Salmon is an excellent source of vitamin D. Other good sources include shrimp, vitamin-D fortified milk, cod, & eggs.

19. Calcium & magnesium, in combination with vitamin D, are vital for your bone health. Calcium & magnesium needs are higher for people who eat the standard western diet (high consumption of sugar, caffeine, & meat & a relatively low consumption of leafy greens & whole grains).

20. Taking vitamins does not make up for an unhealthy diet, & vitamins are an insufficient substitute for nutrients from fresh fruits, vegetables, & whole grains. However, a general multivitamin & mineral supplement can be a good safeguard against periodic vitamin shortfalls in your diet.

21. Saturated fats & trans fats are bad for you because they raise your cholesterol & increase your risk for heart disease. But monounsaturated fats & polyunsaturated fats are good for you, lowering cholesterol & reducing your risk of heart disease.

22. Increase your omega-3 intake. Omega3- fatty acids are highly concentrated in the brain. Research indicates that they play a vital role in cognitive function (memory, problem-solving abilities, etc.), as well as emotional health.

23. Vitamin B. After 50, your stomach produces less gastric acid making it difficult to absorb vitamin B12- needed to help keep blood & nerves vital. Get the recommended daily intake (2.4 mcg) of B12 from fortified foods or a vitamin supplement.

24. Vitamin D. We get most of our vitamin D intake essential to absorbing calcium through sun exposure & certain foods (fatty fish, egg yolk, & fortified milk). With age, our skin is less efficient at synthesizing vitamin D, so consult your doctor about supplementing with fortified foods or a multivitamin.

25. Fiber up. Avoid constipation, lower the risk of chronic diseases, & feel fuller longer by increasing fiber intake. Your go-to fiber-foods are raw fruits & veggies, whole-grains, & beans.

26. Limit Bad carbs. Bad carbs are foods that have been “stripped” of all bran, fiber, & nutrients. They have been processed in order to make cooking fast & easy. Examples are white flour, refined sugar, & white rice. They digest so quickly that they cause dramatic elevations in blood sugar, which over time can lead to weight gain, hypoglycemia or even diabetes.

27. Focus on good carbs. Good carbs are digested slowly. This keeps your blood sugar & insulin levels from rising & falling too quickly, helping you get full quicker & feel fuller longer. Good sources of carbs include whole grains, beans, fruits, & vegetables, which also offer lots of additional health benefits, including heart disease & cancer prevention.

28. Dietary fiber is found in plant foods (fruit, vegetables & whole grains) **& is essential for maintaining a healthy digestive system.** A healthy diet should contain approximately 30 - 20 grams of fiber a day, but most of us only get about half of that amount.

29. Healthy fats contribute to lifelong beauty. Fats are essential for vibrant, glowing skin, hair, & nails. A lack of healthy fats in your diet can lead to dull, flaky skin, brittle nails, & dry or easily-damaged hair.

30. You need fat. Dietary fats are essential to give your body energy & to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs & help keep your body warm. Fats help your body absorb some nutrients & produce important hormones, too. Your body definitely needs fat – but not as much fat as most people eat.

31. Look for hidden sugar. Added sugar can be hidden in foods such as bread, canned soups & vegetables, pasta sauce, instant mashed potatoes, frozen dinners, fast food, & ketchup. Check food labels for alternate terms for sugar such as corn syrup, molasses, brown rice syrup, cane juice, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, or maltose. Opt for fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned goods, & choose low-carb or sugar-free versions of products such as tortillas, bread, pasta, & ice cream.

