

EL CAMINO MEDICAL CLINIC
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BALANCE DIET

A balanced diet means getting the right types and amounts of foods and drinks to supply nutrition and energy for maintaining body cells, tissues, and organs, and for supporting normal growth and development.

Function

A well-balanced diet provides enough energy and nutrition for optimal growth and development.

Food Sources

Milk group (dairy products)

- Cheese: fat-free or reduced-fat (1%)
- Milk or buttermilk: fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%)
- Yogurt: fat-free or low-fat, regular or frozen

Meat and beans group

- Legumes (including beans, lentils, peas, and split peas)
- Meat (beef, pork, poultry with skin removed, game meats, fish, shellfish): select lean cuts; trim away visible fat; broil, roast, or poach
- Nuts and seeds (including almonds, hazelnuts, mixed nuts, peanuts, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, walnuts)
- Tofu, tempeh, and other soy-protein products

Fruit group

- Apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, berries, dates, grapes, grapefruit, mangos, melons, oranges, peaches, pineapples, raisins and other unsweetened dried fruits, tangerines
- 100% fruit juice

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Vegetable group

- Broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, collard and other greens, cucumbers, green beans, kale, lettuces, potatoes, radishes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes
- 100% vegetable juice

Grain group (breads and cereals)

- Enriched, whole-grain breads, rolls, English muffins, bagels, cereals (hot and cold), and pasta
- Grits
- Rice

Oil

- Light or low-fat salad dressing
- Low-fat mayonnaise
- Vegetable oil

Side Effects

An unbalanced diet can cause problems with maintenance of:

- Body tissues
- Brain and nervous system function
- Growth and development

It can also cause problems with bone and [muscle](#) systems.

Recommendations

The term "balanced" simply means that a diet meets your nutritional needs while not providing too much of any nutrients. To achieve a balanced diet, you must eat a variety of foods from each of the food groups. You will need to know:

- How many calories you should consume every day
- What size portions you should eat. Too much of a healthy food may no longer be healthy
- Which are the healthy choices from each food group

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There are several guidelines available to help you plan your balanced diet. They include:

- The [Food Guide Pyramid](#)
- The U.S. Dietary Guidelines (RDA guidelines)

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General Guidelines

- Do not skip breakfast
- Eat at least three meals each day
- Eat foods from each of the food groups at every meal

The most important step to eating a balanced diet is to educate yourself about what your body needs, and to read the nutrition label and ingredients of all the food you eat.

New dietary guidelines from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA) recommend fewer calories and smarter food choices. Some of the key recommendations:

- Follow a balanced diet that is low in saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol, such as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Eating Plan.
- Balance your calorie intake with exercise. Slowly decrease the amount of calories you take in while increasing exercise to prevent gradual weight gain over time. Exercise regularly and reduce activities in which you sit (such as watching TV).
- Eat 2 cups (4 servings) of fruit and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables (5 servings) per day for an average 2,000-calorie per day diet.
- Eat 3 ounces or more of whole-grain products per day.
- Consume 3 cups per day of fat-free or low-fat milk or milk products.
- Get fewer than 10% of calories from saturated fatty acids.
- Avoid trans fatty acids, which are unhealthy fats. They are found in fried foods, commercial baked goods such as donuts, cookies, and crackers, in processed foods, and in margarines.
- Limit cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg/day.

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- Make total fat intake no more than 20 - 35% of calories. Choose "good" fats such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils containing polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids. Lean, low-fat, or fat-free meats, poultry, dry beans, and milk or milk products are preferable. Total fat intake can approach 35% if most of the fats are "good" fats.
- Stay away from added sugars.
- Consume fewer than 2,300 mg (approximately one teaspoon of salt) of sodium daily, and limit added salt when you prepare food.
- Do not consume more than 1 alcoholic drink per day for women, 2 per day for men. Certain people should not drink any alcohol.
- Read nutrition labels on all foods. This will help you know what kind of fats, and how much, the food contains.