

Health and Wellness:
Healthy Food Choices to Lose Weight

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Some people need to lose weight because their blood pressure, cholesterol or other lab work is an issue while many want to lose weight for aesthetic, personal or other reasons. Here is a little guidance for most people in that direction:

Good Food Choices to Make:

- 1) One could have guessed that eating more fruits and veggies would be at the top of this list. Strive to eat 4-5 servings of fruits and 4-5 vegetables most days of the week. Click on the third link below for more on this topic.
 - a) Apples, carrots, grapefruits, nectarines, oranges, peaches and other fruits and veggies as well as lean meats and low-fat dairy products are considered low-density foods. Besides feeling fuller longer, low-density foods have fewer calories than their high-density counterparts such as cookies, dry snack foods, ice cream and others.
 - b) Fruits and vegetables contain more water and fiber than processed foods helping to give a fuller feeling longer. For example, the same number of calories exists in both a whole juicy tomato as well as five pretzel sticks. Try replacing dry foods for water-rich ones to feel fuller longer.
 - c) By eating a large salad before the main course, many people tend to eat less of the higher-calorie main dish. Try eating a healthy salad first with low-fat dressing as the first course. Then, wait a few minutes to notice feelings of fullness before the next course.
- 2) Homemade soup is another way to start a great low-calorie dinner. Ensure that it's a broth-based and not a creamy one. Eating a bowl of healthy soup is one way to reduce the risk of later overeating high-calorie foods.
- 3) While beans, peas, and lentils are packed with powerful nutrients and energy, they make a great food choice because they have similar amounts of protein as meat but significantly less fat. Also, their high fiber content can give feelings of fullness and help prevent constipation. They can be added to soups, used to create a chilled bean salad, or substituted for meat in a main dish.
- 4) The goal is to eat more low-density/healthy foods and not less food overall. Lead by example for the family.

Foods to Avoid:

- 1) Foods which are high in saturated fat such as red meat, butter, whole-fat cheese, milk and other dairy products and palm oils. These foods are high in cholesterol which clog arteries and raise the risks of heart disease and cancer.
- 2) Anything which contains trans fats such as margarine, cakes, pies, frostings, fried foods etc. Trans fats increase one's risk of heart disease as much as saturated fat. "Trans fats" are not listed on labels. Instead, look for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil. The sixth link below provides added education on this topic.
- 3) High-sodium foods – keep one's total daily sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg. Although not a complete list, here is a sampling of some processed items which are typically high in sodium: hot dogs, cheese, tomato sauce, canned and dried soup, deli meat, frozen pizza, potato and pasta mixes and frozen dinners. Being aware and lowering one's sodium reduces one's risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and osteoporosis.
- 4) Drastically limit foods that are not conducive to losing weight.

Other Things Which Will Help:

Consider taking a good fiber supplement and/or a good probiotic. Discuss this with your doctor, read and learn about the importance that both these supplements can have toward healthy weight loss and digestive health. Be wary of any fiber supplements that contain food colors or other harmful chemicals. Also, don't underestimate the importance of an adequate amount of sleep and exercise for one's overall health. Essentially, each person's body is talking – LISTEN!

Cautionary Warnings:

Healthy weight loss should be about 1-2 pounds a week. Significantly more than that on a regular basis can cause other health problems because, for one main reason, the body isn't receiving enough nutrients. For those who need to lose a substantial amount of weight, allowing a realistic amount of time is critical. For example, a motivated person who would like to lose 90 pounds can realistically do that in one year. Remember that it took a while to put on the pounds so, of course, it will take an adequate amount of time to reduce.

Here are some of the links used to write this article:

- 1) <http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/EatHealthyGetActive/EatHealthy/fruits-and-vegetables-do-you-get-enough>
- 2) http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/r2p_energy_density.pdf
- 3) <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-full-story/>
- 4) <http://www.ivillage.com/losing-weight-5-foods-eat-5-foods-avoid/4-a-142542>
- 5) <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/weight-loss/NU00195>
- 6) http://www.vanderbilt.edu/ans/psychology/health_psychology/Transfat.htm
- 7) <http://www.webmd.com/diet/default.htm>