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# Nutrition: Guidelines for Balanced Meals and Special Diets

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# Basic Elements of Good Nutrition

Everybody needs the right amount of nutrients. Nutrients are the elements of food used by the body for energy, maintenance, healing and growth. They include:

- Proteins for growth of muscle and body tissue
    - Sources: meat, fish, eggs, milk, peas, beans, nuts
  - Carbohydrates for energy
    - Sources: bread, grains, cereals, potatoes, peas, beans
  - Fats for warmth, vitamin storage, and energy
    - Sources: meat, dairy products, vegetable oils, egg yolks
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# Basic Elements of Good Nutrition Cont.

- Vitamins for healthy functioning of body systems
    - Sources: fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy products
  - Minerals for growth, strength, healthy blood, bones and body system functions
    - Sources: fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, dairy products, grains
  - Fiber is important for digestion and waste elimination
    - Sources: cereals, grains, fruits and vegetables
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# The Balanced Diet

The USDA recommends to fill plates half full of fruits and vegetables. The MyPlate icon is now used instead of the food pyramid.

We all need balanced intake from six groups:

1. Breads, cereals, rice, pasta (six to 11 servings)
2. Vegetables (three to five servings)
3. Fruits (two to four servings)
4. Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts (two to three servings)
5. Milk, yogurt, cheese (two or three servings)
6. Limited intake of fats, oils and sweets (two to three times per week)

Using a variety of different foods within these groups ensures balance and good nutrition

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# What's a Serving?

- One serving of breads, cereals, rice, pasta (carbohydrates)= one slice bread or one tortilla, half cup cooked rice or pasta, one ounce dry cereal
  - One serving of vegetables= one cup leafy vegetables(salad), 10 french fries, half cup cooked vegetables, half cup vegetable juice
  - One serving of fruit=half cup canned, fresh or frozen fruit, one medium (about the size of a baseball) apple, orange or banana, half cup fruit juice
  - One serving of protein meat, poultry, fish, beans, peanut butter, eggs (protein)= 2-3 ounces of meat, poultry, fish, half cup of dry beans or peas, two tablespoons peanut butter, one egg.
  - One serving of milk, yogurt, cheese= one cup milk, 8 ounces of yogurt, 1.5 ounces of cheddar cheese
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# Calories

Calories are the amount of energy in food. Calorie need varies by size, weight, age and activity. Body metabolism slows as we age, so the elderly require fewer calories. However, the need for water, fiber and all nutrients remains the same in older people. So eating healthy food is more important.

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# Special Diets

Many people have special dietary needs because of illness, surgery or ongoing conditions. Be sure you know the type of diet every patient is supposed to be eating. Mistakes on special diets can have serious results and cause many problems for the patient.

- Low Salt
    - Low salt diets, also referred to as restricted sodium or low NA. Many people with heart and kidney disease or high blood pressure must eat this kind of diet.
      - Guidelines
        - Little or no salt is used in preparing food
        - No salt should be added by the patient
        - Salty snacks are not allowed (potato chips, pretzels)
        - Condiments that contain salt may be prohibited (ketchup, mustard, margarine)
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# Special Diets Cont.

- Low-fat diets are often recommended for people with heart disease or obesity.
    - Guidelines
      - Eat low-fat foods like chicken, vegetables, fruits, pasta and cereal.
      - Do not eat fatty foods like ice cream, egg yolks, bacon and sausage.
  - Soft diets help people who have difficulty chewing or suffer from certain kinds of stomach trouble. Foods that are part of this diet can include cooked vegetables, ground meat, fish and pureed foods.
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# Special Diets Cont.

- Diabetic diet- it is important for people with diabetes to eat the right foods, whether or not they are taking insulin or other medicine to control their diabetes. A diabetic patient should have a diet plan designed especially for him or her by a doctor or nutritionist. It will specify certain amounts of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.
  - High protein- a patient who has just had surgery or who has a wound often needs high protein to speed healing. To get protein, this person may eat lots of meat, fish, eggs, beans, peas and dairy products.
  - Liquid diets- full liquid includes all liquids, such as strained soups, milk and ice cream. Clear liquid includes only liquids that are see through, such as water, tea, apple juice, clear broth and black coffee.
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## Serving Tips

If a patient has impaired vision, identify the foods on his or her plate by using a clock face: “your pork chop is at 3 o’clock, your mashed potatoes are at 6 o’clock and your pudding is on a separate dish above the plate at 12 o’clock.”

When feeding a patient, identify the foods and ask the patient what food he or she wants next. Offer seasonings if allowed. Offer liquids often, using a different straw for each liquid. Allow hot liquids to cool. Offer one bite at a time, using a spoon two-thirds full. Serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold!

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# Food Safety

To avoid food poisoning:

- Never undercook meat. Cook until meat temperature is 165 degrees Fahrenheit to kill the bacteria.
  - Refrigerated foods must be kept below 45 degrees Fahrenheit.
  - Thaw frozen foods quickly and cook them before they reach room temperature.
  - Foods that will spoil at room temperature should be prepared last.
  - Keep fresh foods separate from each other and use different surfaces and utensils when preparing each one.
  - Cover unserved portions to prevent contamination.
  - Cool leftovers quickly by refrigerating them in small containers
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