

7 PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTHY EATING

Michael Pollan, the author of the books “Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual” and “In Defense of Food,” has a famous quote that says, “**Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.**” Although this phrase may have eating simplified too much, it is a very helpful thought and idea that everyone should consider when thinking about eating in healthier ways.

The following is a list of seven foundational ideas for implementing a healthier eating plan into your regular routine.

1. Know Yourself

What you like to eat and what works for you may not work for the next person. Healthy eating and dieting is not a one-size-fits-all concept. You may have a family member or friend who can eat whatever they want and not gain a pound. Why is that? You may also know people who really struggle with eating fruits and vegetables because they just don’t like the taste. Everybody is different. Don’t assume your situation is the same as everyone else’s. If you want to lead a healthier lifestyle, the following six principles will lay a solid foundation for you. You will need to begin to do the work to decide how to best implement these ideas into your daily routine.

2. Give Beetroots And Kiwi A Chance

Fruits and vegetables do need to become a more important part of your meal planning and eating. See the separate handout titled, “Easy Ways To Add Fruits And Vegetables To Your Day.”

3. Eat Less Meat

The carnivores in the group may not love this idea, but meat does not need to be a mainstay in a healthy diet. Grains, nuts, and non-starchy vegetables and fruits should take greater priority. Learn to include meat alternatives in your diet. Options such as quinoa, lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, and even broccoli can be healthy substitutes that provide some of the same benefits of meat.



4. Choose Healthy Fats

Not all fats are created equal, and there seems to be a lot of confusion around fat in general. There are some healthy and helpful kinds of fat and fat that can be more harmful.

Healthier Dietary Fat

- **Monounsaturated fatty acids.** This is a type of fat found in a variety of foods and oils. Studies show that eating foods rich in monounsaturated fatty acids improves blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease the risk of heart disease. Research shows that these fatty acids may benefit insulin levels and blood sugar control, which can be helpful if you have type-2 diabetes. Examples of foods high in monounsaturated fats include:
 - Vegetable oil, olive oil, canola oil, and sunflower oil
 - Macadamia nuts
 - Olives
 - Almonds
 - Hazelnuts
 - Pecans
 - Avocados
- **Polyunsaturated fatty acids.** This is a type of fat found mostly in plant-based foods and oils. Evidence shows that eating foods rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids improves blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease the risk of heart disease. Examples of foods high in polyunsaturated fats include:
 - Soybean oil
 - Corn oil
 - Sunflower oil
 - Fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring, and trout
 - Walnuts
 - Sunflower seeds
 - Tofu
- **Omega-3 fatty acids.** One type of polyunsaturated fat is made up of mainly omega-3 fatty acids and may be especially beneficial to your heart. Omega-3, found in some types of fatty fish, appears to decrease the risk of coronary artery disease. There are plant sources of omega-3 fatty acids, however it hasn't yet been determined whether replacements for fish oil – plant-based or krill – have the same health effects as omega-3 fatty acids from fish. Omega-3 fats have many functions in our body and are important for good health. There are three kinds of omega-3, ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid). Examples of foods with omega-3 fatty acids include:
 - Edamame/soybeans



- Winter squash
- Grain products
- Wheat germ cereal, toasted
- Milk
- Eggs
- Yogurt (with omega-3 added specifically)

More Harmful Dietary Fat

- **Saturated fat.** This is a type of fat that comes mainly from animal sources of food such as red meat, poultry, and full-fat dairy products. Saturated fat raises total blood cholesterol levels and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels, which can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- **Trans fat.** This is a type of fat that occurs naturally in some foods in small amounts, but most trans fats are made from oils through a food processing method called partial hydrogenation. These partially hydrogenated trans fats can increase unhealthy LDL cholesterol and lower healthy high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.

Most fats that have a high percentage of saturated fat or that contain trans fat are solid at room temperature. Because of this, they're typically referred to as solid fats. They include beef fat, pork fat, butter, shortening, and stick margarine.

5. Portions Are Important

The amount one consumes during meals or snacks will contribute to their overall health. Too little is not healthy and too much is a concern as well. Be sure to listen to your internal body cues that tell you to eat when you are hungry, and stop eating when you feel satisfied. You don't necessarily need to eat everything on your plate.

Canada's Food Guide will help with portion sizes. Your facilitator would have described the "plate method" as a concept to consider when thinking about portion sizes.

6. Eat, Don't Drink, Your Calories

Most beverages don't contribute many nutrients, and most people will eat the same amount whether they wash their food down with water or a sugar-sweetened drink that carries 150 calories or more with it. There is a current "push" in the city of London to educate people about some of the misconceptions of beverages. For example, pop is known to be "bad," but many consider sports drinks and vitamin water as "healthy" options when this is likely not the case, as they too are sugar-sweetened. Be sure to do your homework before just including any beverage with your meal.



7. Eat More Whole Foods And Limit Packaged Foods

The outside of the grocery store is definitely the place to be when you are getting your groceries. The outside aisles typically include the fruits and vegetables and whole foods, while the middle aisles tend to have all the boxes and wrappers, and much of the sodium, trans fats, and added sugars that are found in highly processed or ultra processed treats. They are certainly convenient, but not healthy. Be sure to read labels to get a better sense for what ingredients are included in your processed foods.

