

# Healthy Eating - The Basics

By Jan Clementson

## The Goal

Healthy eating is about developing a life-long eating plan that makes you feel great, gives you more energy, balances your mood and reduces your risk of disease. It is not about strict dietary limitations, depriving yourself of foods that you love or staying unrealistically thin. If you feel overwhelmed by all of the conflicting nutrition and diet advice out there, you are not alone. Following the simple tips below will help you to cut through the confusion and learn how to create a tasty, varied, and healthy diet.



## Set Yourself Up For Success

Plan a healthy diet as a number of small, manageable steps rather than one big drastic change. If you approach the changes gradually and with commitment, you will have a healthy diet sooner than you think.

<b>Simplify</b>	Think in terms of colour, variety and freshness and focus on finding foods that you love.
<b>Start Slowly</b>	Make small changes to your diet. As these become habit, continue to add more healthy choices.
<b>Change Matters</b>	Every change made to your diet counts, even if you relapse to your old ways. Don't let hiccups derail you.
<b>Water</b>	Ensure you are well hydrated to prevent tiredness, low energy and headaches.
<b>Exercise</b>	Find something active that you like and do it every day. It will help to make healthy food choices a habit.



## Moderation and Balance

Key aspects of any healthy diet are moderation and balance. Moderation means eating only as much food as your body needs, so that you feel satisfied at the end of a meal but not stuffed. Whereas balance refers to the need to include a good balance of foods from all the major food groups - carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients.

<b>No Limits</b>	Do not try to eliminate completely certain foods, even unhealthy ones. You will only start to crave them.
<b>Unhealthy Choices</b>	Reduce the number of times that you eat junk food to lessen their impact. Your cravings will also start to reduce.
<b>Portion Size</b>	Reduce portion size by using smaller plates. Such visual cues can help the brain control portion size.
<b>Balance</b>	If you do blow out on unhealthy food, then simply balance it out at the next meal with healthy choices.



## Reconnect with Food

How you **think** about food is just as important as what you are eating. Taking the time to slow down and think about the food that you are eating as nourishment will allow time for the body's satiety signals to kick in and will bring back the enjoyment of eating. Gulping down food to just fill a hole in your stomach will lead to mindless overeating.

<b>Eat with Others</b>	Allows you to model healthy eating habits and has numerous social and emotional benefits.
<b>Eat Slowly</b>	Take time to chew your food slowly and taste the flavours and textures. Learn to enjoy eating again.
<b>Drink Water</b>	Thirst signals can often be mistaken for hunger signals. Try drinking water

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	when you feel hungry.
<b>Stop Eating Early</b>	Stop eating before you feel full. It takes a few minutes for your brain to tell your body that it has had enough.
<b>Eat Regularly</b>	Do not skip meals and eat small snacks during the day to prevent cravings and provide sustained energy.

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## Rainbow Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are the foundation of a healthy diet. They are low in calories and nutrient dense, which means that they are packed with vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, antioxidants and fibre. The deeper and richer the colour, the higher the concentration of nutrients and each colour provides different benefits. Those benefits don't come from a single vitamin or an isolated antioxidant but from the multiple nutrients working together synergistically. This is why nutritional supplements are unable to provide the same impact. Supplements should be used as the name suggests: supplemental to a healthy diet.

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<b>Rainbow Colours</b>	Eat a variety of different coloured fruit and vegetables each day. The brighter the colour the better.
<b>Portions</b>	Aim for a minimum of five portions each day. The greater the number of portions, the greater the benefits.
<b>Supplements</b>	Get your diet right first. Supplements should not be a replacement for a lack of fruit and vegetables.

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## Complex Carbohydrates and Whole Grains

Carbohydrates are the main fuel of the body and provide the energy for you to function. They are made up of chains of sugar units that are linked together and are broken down to a single sugar unit. The length of the chain determines the speed at which the molecule is digested. The more complex

the chain, the longer it takes to digest and the better it is at keeping you full longer and providing sustained energy. The shorter the chain, the quicker the molecule is digested and the greater you will experience energy fluctuations, cravings and mood swings.

Hence, complex carbohydrates are the "good carbs" and include grains, beans, vegetables and fruits. However, be aware that the grains need to be "whole grains" to provide these benefits. The refined white grains, such as white bread, pasta, rice and pastries have been stripped of their nutrients and fibre during processing. Their effects on blood sugar levels are very dramatic leading to widely fluctuating energy and mood, as well as sugar cravings. These are the "bad carbs" that should be avoided.

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<b>Healthy Carbs</b>	At each meal, eat some form of healthy carbohydrate: whole grains, beans, vegetables and fruits.
<b>Unhealthy Carbs</b>	Avoid the white refined foods such as breads, pastas, rice, breakfast cereals, pastries, cakes, biscuits and sugar. .
<b>White to Brown</b>	Start switching your white grains to their brown whole grain equivalents. Mix the types at first if necessary.
<b>Variety</b>	Introduce a variety of whole grains, including whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, barley and oats.
<b>100% Whole Grain</b>	Some brown grains are only partial whole grains. Look for the words "whole grain" on the ingredients list.

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## Know Your Fats

Fats are just as important to your diet as other types of nutrients. Over the years they have had a bad press and have been linked to multiple health problems from obesity to high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. The message has been to avoid fats if you want to be healthy. But this misses

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the point that fats are essential to your health. The key is to differentiate between the good and the bad fats.

The Omega-3 and Omega-6 unsaturated fats are absolutely essential because they cannot be made by the body and must be eaten regularly in the diet. They have multiple functions, including hormonal and structural properties. Even cholesterol is essential. Cholesterol is the raw material from which all of your steroid hormones are made. They include the hormones that govern your stress response, your metabolism and even your sexual hormone cycle. Such is the importance of cholesterol, that the body makes its own!

The fats to avoid are the trans-fats. These are fats that have been altered chemically through processing, usually through hydrogenation. The fats may start off as healthy by using Omega-6 oils, such as sunflower oil. But once altered, these fats can cause disruption to bodily processes by blocking enzyme systems, which can ultimately lead to health problems. Margarine is a classic example of a healthy Omega-6 fat being turned into an unhealthy trans-fat. Revert back to butter – it's much healthier.

<b>Omega-3 Fats</b>	Aim to eat 3 portions of oily fish per week, such as: salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines, anchovies.
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<b>Omega-6 Fats</b>	Include each week lean and fresh meat, other animal products, and oils such as borage or sunflower oil.
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<b>Trans-Fats</b>	Avoid or restrict intake of margarines, crackers, biscuits, sweets, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, and other processed foods.
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## Value Your Proteins

Proteins are crucial to virtually every process within your body. They are the building blocks for growth and energy; are essential for maintaining cells, tissues

and organs; and form the basis of your enzymes, hormones and immune cells. Without protein, your body would cease to function. However, most people simply do not get enough protein to power the numerous bodily functions on a daily basis, let alone during times of stress when the requirement for proteins increases.

Eating protein at each meal and with each snack will ensure an adequate supply and will help to balance your energy levels through a more sustained energy release. The key to achieving this is to ensure that you eat a wide variety of proteins that include vegetable sources as well as the more traditional meat, fish and dairy sources.

<b>Protein Frequency</b>	Eat protein with each meal and snack, including breakfast. During times of stress, increase your protein intake.
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<b>Animal Proteins</b>	Include meat, fish, fowl, eggs and dairy, as these are high quality proteins.
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<b>Vegetable Proteins</b>	Beans, soya, legumes peas, nuts and seeds. Small amounts are also found in seeds, grains, vegetables and fruits.
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<b>Protein Snacks</b>	These can be simple as spreading humous or peanut butter on a cracker or eating nuts with fruit.
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## Limit Your Sugar

The Western world is in a 'sugar crises'. Sugar is consumed in alarming quantities every day leading to energy and mood fluctuations, weight problems, hormonal imbalances and other health conditions. It is everywhere and often you don't even realise that you are consuming it. Large amounts of added sugar can be hidden in foods such as bread, canned soups and vegetables, pasta sauce, margarine, frozen dinners, fast food, soy sauce, and ketchup. Shocking

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recent statistics suggest that one third of the UK population are pre-diabetic, and sugar is the culprit.

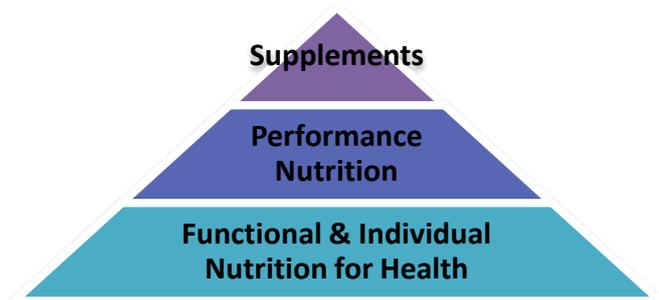
The key to controlling sugar is to prepare your food yourself and to plan your diet around fibre-rich vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins and good fats. Move away from the processed and ready-made foods, limit your sweet treats and learn to read the 'hidden' sugar on food labels.

<b>Sugary Drinks</b>	Avoid sugary drinks such as coke, which can contain up to 10 teaspoons of sugar. Try sparkling water with lemon or a splash of fruit juice.
<b>Naturally Sweet</b>	Use naturally sweet food such as fruit, organic honey or natural nut butters to satisfy your sweet tooth.
<b>Food Labels</b>	Sugar is often disguised using terms such as: maple syrup, corn syrup/sweetener, honey, molasses, brown rice syrup, fruit juice concentrates, maltodextrin/dextrin, dextrose, fructose, glucose, maltose or sucrose. Learn to read the labels.



## Sports Nutrition

**Get the basics right first.** Focus on eating for health and wellbeing first before considering Performance Nutrition or Supplements. Understand and apply the basic principles of effective hydration, and the need for both the macro and micro-nutrients.



## Top Tips for Healthy Eating

### Tip 1

- Set yourself up for success.

### Tip 2

- Moderation and balance.

### Tip 3

- Reconnect with food.

### Tip 4

- Eat rainbow fruit and vegetables.

### Tip 5

- Eat complex carbs and whole grains.

### Tip 6

- Eat good fats and avoid the bad.

### Tip 7

- Eat protein with every meal.

### Tip 8

- Limit your sugar intake.

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