

What is a healthy diet?

The basis of a healthy diet is eating a wide variety of foods. Every day, you should try to eat:*

6 to 11 servings of bread, cereal, rice, or pasta. One serving equals one slice of bread, about 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta.

3 to 5 servings of vegetables. One serving equals 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables, or 1/2 cup of other vegetables, cooked or raw.

2 to 4 servings of fruit. One serving equals one medium apple, banana, or orange; 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit; or 3/4 cup of fruit juice.

2 to 3 servings of milk, yogurt, or cheese. One serving equals 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese (such as Cheddar), or 2 ounces of processed cheese (such as American). Choose low-fat or fat-free products most often.

2 to 3 servings of meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, or nuts. One serving equals 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry without skin, or fish. You should eat no more than 5 to 7 ounces per day. One half cup of cooked dry beans, one egg, or 1/2 cup of tofu counts as 1 ounce of meat. Two tablespoons of peanut butter or 1/3 cup of nuts counts as 1 ounce of lean meat.

The larger number of servings is for active men. Eat a smaller number of servings if you are a woman, inactive, or trying to lose weight.

* Servings and serving sizes are from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Department of Health and Human Services Food Guide Pyramid

You can not always measure your food. Here are some ways to help you estimate serving sizes.

1/2 cup of rice or pasta = size of ice cream scoop

1 cup of salad greens = size of a baseball

1/2 cup of chopped fruit or vegetables = size of a lightbulb

1 1/2 ounces of cheese = size of four dice

3 ounces of meat or fish = size of a deck of cards or cassette tape

2 tablespoons peanut butter = size of a ping pong ball

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