

10 Nutrition Tips for a Healthier You

1) Aim to achieve and maintain a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI)

The journey to good health begins with achieving a healthy BMI. Should you need to lose weight, reduce your energy intake by choosing nutritious food that are low in calories and through regular exercise. Aim to lose weight gradually (about ½ to 1 kg per week) and consult a qualified nutritionist or dietitian for a customised weight-reduction diet and exercise programme.

2) Eat more fruits and vegetables everyday

Aim for 2 servings of fruits +2 servings of vegetables everyday and eat a variety for maximum health benefits as different fruits and vegetables are rich in different nutrients (vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fibre)

3) Choose and prepare foods with less fat, especially saturated fat

Reduce your saturated fat intake when you cut down your total fat intake. Look out for visible (floating on soups, creamy sauces and thick curries) and ‘hidden’ (cakes, pastries and local kuehs) sources of fat in your diet.

When cooking at home, choose oil higher in unsaturated fat, limit deep-frying to twice a week, use lean cuts of meat/poultry and remove visible fat and skin.

When eating out, ask for less oil, choose dishes cooked without coconut milk/cream and choose plain rice over flavoured rice (e.g. chicken rice and nasi lemak)

4) Choose and prepare foods with less salt and sauces

An average healthy adult needs no more than 2000mg of sodium a day (equivalent to 1 teaspoon of table salt). However, the average Singaporean takes about 3500mg of sodium a day, mostly through the use of salt and sauces (e.g. soy sauce, ketchup and chilli sauce) added in the preparation of food and at the table. Some common local dishes are also loaded with sodium, for example a bowl of fishball noodles (dry) has 1650mg sodium and a plate of chicken rice has 1290mg sodium.

Reduce your salt intake by choosing fresh vegetables, poultry and meat over processed, cured or pickled food. If you need to spice up your meals, use natural seasonings such as onions, garlic, ginger, herbs and spices instead. Use salt sparingly and taste your food before adding salt and/or sauces. When eating out, ask for less sauce and gravy.

5) Choose foods and beverages with less sugar

Consuming too many beverages and food high in added sugar can lead to excess calorie intake, which also spoils your appetite for nutritious food as well as tooth decay, if oral hygiene is neglected.

6) If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

Women should drink no more than 2 standard drinks a day and men no more than 3 standard drinks a day. One standard alcoholic drink is equivalent to 2/3 can (220ml) regular beer, 1 glass (100ml) wine, 1 nip (30ml) spirit

7) Increase your intake of wholegrains

Wholegrains have more vitamins (B and E), minerals (iron, zinc and magnesium) and beneficial plant substances (phytochemicals) than refined or polished grains. Wholegrains are also rich in fibre, which promote bowel function.

8) When shopping for foods, choose products with the Healthier Choice Symbol

Look out for this symbol when you go grocery shopping at the supermarket. Products with the Healthier Choice Symbol are lower in fat, saturated fat, sodium, higher in dietary fibre and calcium compared to other products in similar categories (e.g. oil, breads, dairy products)

9) Regular exercise of at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

Regular physical activity helps manage weight, increases lean muscle mass, increases your fitness level, helps build and maintain strong bones, lowers your risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke, relieves stress and helps you relax and sleep better too!

Some examples of physical activity include brisk walking, jogging, swimming and daily activities such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, doing household chores and getting off the bus one stop earlier and walking the remaining distance to your destination.

10) Have a balanced diet and variety of foods in moderation

Healthy eating is choosing a well-balanced diet, high in dietary fibre, low in saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar and salt. It also means having different types of foods in appropriate amounts and not overeating any one type of food.