

Guidelines for healthy eating

The healthy eating guidelines support a diet that reduces the risk of food related disease, as well as a balanced diet to get all the nutrients your body needs to function properly¹.

Most important dietary recommendations to reduce disease risk

1. EAT MORE WHOLE GRAINS

(Vita Score points²: 203)

At least 125g/day

Replace white bread, pasta and plain rice with their whole-grain alternatives and integrate whole-grain alternatives such as bulgur and polenta into your diet.

2. EAT MORE FRUITS

(Vita Score points: 144)

At least 250g/day

Think of fruits when you need a snack, add fruits to your salad or certain dishes even include fruits.

3. EAT MORE VEGETABLES

(Vita Score points: 90)

At least 420g/day

Plan and build your meal starting with the vegetables you want to eat and add more side-dishes to your table.

4. EAT MORE NUTS AND SEEDS

(Vita Score points: 122)

At least 20g/day

Seeds and nuts fit to almost any dish and are rich in beneficial unsaturated fats. Roast them for even more taste and add them as a finishing touch. They are also a great snack for in between meals.

¹ Recommendations for an adult western European person.

² The Vita Score complements existing dietary recommendations and guidelines and stresses the role of bad dietary habits related to disease. A good Vita Score can be reached by following the food group based diet recommendations based on the findings of the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) (1). Those guidelines that influence the Vita Score the most are listed first. The relative weights of the recommendations used in the Vita score are listed in brackets.



5. EAT LESS PROCESSED MEAT

(Vita Score points: 40)

Maximum 4g/day

Which other ingredients do you enjoy particularly that enrich your diet? With some effort, include them more often. Processed meat is meat preserved by smoking, curing, salting, or addition of chemical preservatives, for example bacon, salami, sausages, ham, turkey, and pastrami.

6. EAT LESS SALT

(Vita Score points: 48)

Maximum 5g/day, that's only one teaspoon

Cook fresh. Many processed and finished meals have extra salt in them. Use spices and herbs to add more flavour.

7. EAT LESS RED MEAT

(Vita Score points: 14)

Maximum 27g/day, that is 189g/week

Think of other protein sources too, especially legumes are a good and healthy source of protein.

8. ADD MILK

(Vita Score points: 11)

At least 340ml / day

This includes non-fat, low-fat and full-fat milk but excludes the plant derivatives (e.g. soy milk).

Additional dietary recommendations for balanced eating

Energy: 1/10 protein, 3/10 fat and 6/10 starch

A balanced meal should derive around 1/10 of it's calories from protein, 3/10 from fat and 6/10 from starchy products (4-6). The recommended amount of calories per day depends on age, gender and physical activity. For an average adult it is approximately 2000 kcal (3).

Vegetables: should cover at least 40% of your plate

Include vegetables abundantly in every dish. The approximate volume that vegetables should cover on your plate is 40% (2).

Fat: 20-30 % of energy per day

The recommended amount of essential fats is 20-30 % of the energy per day. The most important are poly unsaturated fats such as omega 3 and omega 6. Plant oils such as olive oil, rapeseed oil and sunflower oil) contain mainly omega-6 fatty acids, whereas fatty fish, but also algae, flax seed oil, chia seed oil, other seed oils and most nuts and seeds themselves are rich in omega-3 fats.



Avoid processed foods that are rich in trans fats

Trans fats are related to cardiovascular diseases and are mainly found in snacks such as crisps, french fries and other deep fried foods, finished cake mixes and frostings and hardened plant fats such as margarines and other spreads.

Reduce products with added sugars

Among others, glucose sirup, sucrose or corn sirup are often added to beverages and other processed foods. They do not provide any nutritional value except for "empty calories", which means a high energy intake, but no nutrients and correlates strongly with obesity.

Bibliography

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