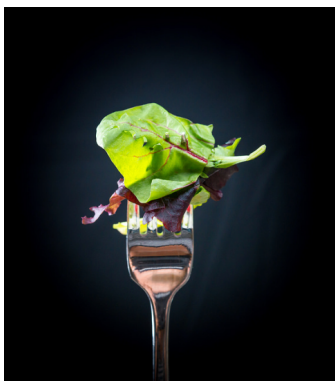


# How Healthful is Your Eating Pattern?

**Healthful eating habits begin with what's in your fridge and pantry.** A balanced diet does not rely on fancy supplements, protein powders, or magical food combinations, nor does it necessitate shopping at high-priced specialty stores. Instead, what's important is knowing the basics of a healthful diet and making it work for you. Here are some answers to common myths about your food.

**What are whole grains and why should I eat them? Aren't carbs bad?** All grains contain carbohydrate, which is used by your body and brain for energy. Whole grains have undergone the least amount of processing and contain more fiber, zinc, vitamin E, and other nutrients that are vital to good health and disease prevention than refined grains. Studies show that individuals with the highest-fiber diets have some of the lowest rates of deaths from cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

**Why eat seasonal fruits and vegetables?** Produce that is in season will be least expensive and taste the best since it has been ripened naturally and harvested at the peak time. Seasonal produce also tends to retain more nutrients because it does not need to be stored or refrigerated for long periods of time before transport. Plus, when you buy locally, your food is picked within days of being sold and you're supporting a local farmer. Frozen fruits and vegetables are also nutritious and low in sodium and sugar when packed solo. Eat a variety of produce daily for best health.



**Should fat be avoided?** No. All fats are not created equal. More and more research suggests that the type (and quantity) of fat in your diet is what matters. Use heart-healthy, plant-based fats such as canola, olive, soybean, or peanut oil in place of solid fats like butter, lard, or margarine. Include avocados, nuts, seeds and nut butters in your diet too. Fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and halibut are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, a fat also found in flaxseed and walnuts, that helps reduce the risk for heart disease. These foods provide your body with essential fatty acids, vitamin E, fiber, and other important nutrients for good health.

**Should I take a multivitamin or other supplement?** Most healthy individuals that regularly eat a variety of foods from all the major food groups should not need supplements. However, if you suffer from malabsorption conditions (Crohn's disease, cystic fibrosis, pancreatitis) or autoimmune disease (MS, rheumatoid arthritis, Celiac disease), then your risk for deficiencies is higher. Ask your doctor or registered dietitian if a supplement is appropriate for you.

**Bottom line:** Fill your plate with real, whole foods. When dining out, choose restaurants that offer healthful options like salads and soups along with lean protein and whole grains. Limit processed, fried, sodium-rich, and sugary items. When in doubt, choose nutrients!

*By Lisa C. Andrews, MEd, RD, LD*

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