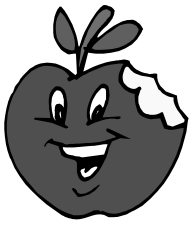
Health Facts 101

Healthy Eating & Exercise: Your health depends on it!

In the United States, the problem of overweight is affecting many children, adolescents and adults. Overweight means having too much body weight compared to your height and it is not always easy to tell if this problem affects you. If you think you may be overweight, make an appointment with your family doctor to have your weight assessed or calculate your own body mass index using the web site found in the resource section. If you are overweight, the cause could be due to genetics, poor diet, and/or poor physical activity habits. Being overweight can cause social, emotional and health-related problems. Since you can't change your genes, let's look at some ways to control your weight through eating a wide variety of foods and being physically active.

Snacking is good if. . .

the right snacks are chosen. Since teens usually eat few regular meals, many of the nutrients that your body needs in a day come from snacks. Snacks chosen by teens tend to be high-sugar or high fat foods such as potato chips, soft drinks, candy and ice cream, with fruits and vegetables chosen less frequently as snacks[1]. The important thing to remember is to keep nutritious snacks available such as a piece of fruit, crackers, pretzels, or other healthy choices. Vending machines commonly offer healthy choices such as animal crackers, peanuts, wheat crackers, pretzels, juice, yogurt, milk, bagels, and pudding. Try to have a few of these kinds of snacks each day instead of high-fat and high-sugar snacks like candy or chips.



Fast food doesn't have to be bad if. . .

it is eaten in moderation and some healthful choices are made. The average teen visits fast food restaurants twice a week, with adolescents as a whole spending nearly $13 billion each year[1]. Since eating at fast food restaurants is a reality, try to make healthy choices while you are there. The following things could be done to reduce fat and calories while eating at fast food restaurants[1]:

- Order milk or juice, instead of pop
- Add a salad
- Choose a small hamburger or cheeseburger instead of a larger one
- Bring fruit along to have for dessert instead of a cookie or pie
- Share fries with a friend
- Order a grilled chicken sandwich, chili, a bean burrito, cheese pizza or a baked potato instead of a burger, a fried chicken sandwich or a breaded fish sandwich
- Skip the mayonnaise-based sauces on sandwiches and burgers and use barbecue sauce or mustard instead

If you usually go to a fast food restaurant 3 times a week, try only going 2 times and bring a lunch from home the other day.. You'll be amazed at how much money you can save and how much better you will feel.

Be active and enjoy life!

Television and computers have replaced daily physical activities like riding a bike after school or playing ball with your friends. There is also less physical activity time in schools so it is even more important to do something that gets you moving after school or on the weekends. Being physically active helps you control your weight as well as makes you feel healthy and fit. Here are some suggestions to leading a more physically active life.

- Watch no more than 1-2 hours of TV per day.[2]
- Each day, try doing 30 minutes of moderate exercise[3]--try a new activity like rollerblading, running, or tennis.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood or have a dance party with your friends.
- Instead of getting a ride somewhere, walk if you can. Instead of using elevators, take the stairs. Every little bit counts!!
- Join a fun, non-competitive sports team in your community.

Overall, don't eat any one food too often. Try to eat a variety of foods, including things from all the food groups each day (dairy, meats, grains, fruits and vegetables). If one day doesn't go too well, try making up for it the next day with more healthy foods. After a while, you will feel better about yourself and you will have more energy to be physically active. Try it. What do you have to lose?

For more information about healthy diet and exercise, check out these great resources!

- American Heart Association:
  http://www.americanheart.org/
  They have a cookbook just for you!
  1-800-AHA-USA1
- Kids World - Nutrition:
  http://www.agr.state.nc.us/cyber/kidswrld/ nutrition from the North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- YMCA - USA
  http://www.ymca.net/
  Find A YMCA near you!
  1-888-333-YMCA
- National Heart Lung and Blood Institute:
  http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm
  Calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI) at this site

Examples of foods in each food group and how many you need in a day[4]:

- **Grains (6+ servings/day)**
  1 slice of bread
  1/2 cup cooked rice or pasta
  1/2 cup of cooked cereal
  3/4 cup ready-to-eat cereal
- **Fruits (2+ servings/day)**
  1 piece of fruit
  1/2 cup of juice
  1/2 cup canned fruit
  1/4 cup dried fruit
- **Vegetables (3+ servings/day)**
  1/2 cup of raw or cooked vegetables
  1 cup raw leafy vegetables
- **Milk (3-4 servings/day)**
  1 cup of milk or yogurt
  2 oz. of cheese
- **Meat (2-3 servings/day)***
  2-3 oz. of cooked meat, poultry, or fish
  1/2 cup of cooked dry beans
  * 1 egg counts as 1 oz. of meat
  * 2 tbls. of peanut butter counts as 1 oz. of meat

References

1. Story, M., and Stang, J. (eds). Nutrition and the Pregnancy Adolescent: A Practical Reference Guide. Reprinted with permission. Center for Leadership, Education, and Training in Maternal and Child Nutrition, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 2000.
2. American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Communications. (1995). Children, adolescents and television (policy statement). Pediatrics, 96, 786-787.
3. US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). Nutrition and your health: Dietary guidelines for Americans. URL: http://www.usda.gov:80/fnic/dga/.
4. US Department of Agriculture. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. URL: http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/.

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Find this factsheet and other resources at:
http://www.epi.umn.edu/mch/pages/hgrsorc.html

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