

The Nutritional Food Pyramid

A good diet is rich in nutrients. Nutrients are the things in food that your body needs to stay healthy and grow. The food pyramid groups foods according to the kinds of nutrients they provide. The foods that contain the nutrients your body needs most are drawn at the bottom of the pyramid. The foods that contain the least amount of nutrients are at the very top. To get all the nutrients your body needs you need to eat a variety of foods as shown by the food pyramid.

Whole Grain Foods:

This group forms the bottom of the pyramid, so you should eat a lot of them all day long. Examples of whole grain foods are: oatmeal, whole-wheat bread and brown rice. These foods are so good for you because they are great sources of carbohydrates, the nutrient that the body uses as its major energy source. Unlike foods made out of white flour, whole grain foods also provide lots of fiber, minerals and vitamins.

Vegetables and Fruits:

Vegetables and fruits are also foods you should eat in abundance. They are loaded with vitamins and minerals. For example, carrots are a good source of vitamin A to keep your eyes healthy, while broccoli gives your body lots of iron to keep your blood strong. Fruits often provide vitamin C, which your body needs to help fight against colds. Both vegetables and fruits provide your body with the fiber it needs for good digestion.

Proteins:

Proteins are used for almost every important function your body performs. For example, the muscles, tendons and ligaments that help you move are made out of proteins. There are many foods that are rich in protein, however some of these foods are healthier than others. Nuts and beans are very healthy sources of protein that not only have lots of protein, but also provide many important vitamins, minerals and healthy fats your body needs to function. Fish, chicken and eggs in moderation are healthy options for people who like to eat animal products.

Dairy or Calcium Supplement

Building bones and keeping them strong takes calcium, vitamin D, exercise and a whole lot more. Dairy products have traditionally been America's main source of calcium, however this is not the only option. Whole milk, cheese and yogurt can often contain a lot of unhealthy fats. Additionally, many dairy cows in the United States are being treated with different medicines and chemicals to make them produce more milk. Many scientists are worried that this may make the milk from these cows less healthy for humans. However, there are many healthy options for getting the calcium you need:

eating dairy products that are nonfat and organic, eating vegetables high in calcium, drinking orange juice fortified with calcium or taking a calcium supplement.

Every Once-In-Awhile

There are many foods you may think taste really good that are actually harmful to your health when you eat too much of them. Eating foods that are high in unhealthy fats, such as red meat and butter, can put the health of your heart at risk. Foods like white bread, white rice, pasta and potatoes are high in simple carbohydrates. Unlike whole-grain foods, the carbohydrates in these foods are broken down into sugar by your digestive system too quickly causing sudden changes in the amount of sugar circulating in our blood. Actually eating sweets high in sugar will cause even bigger changes in your blood sugar. Sudden changes like these too often can lead to weight gain, diabetes, heart disease and other problems.

Conclusion:

Changing what you eat all at once is not easy. However, using the information from the food pyramid to help you make healthier food choices is easy. Your taste buds may be spoiled by the junk food you eat now and start telling you to keep eating all that unhealthy stuff. Don't listen to them!!! Sure, a treat every once in awhile is fine, but mostly you need to train those taste buds to learn to identify and enjoy the foods high in the nutrients your body needs. Your body will thank you for the effort and you will appreciate the joy of feeling healthy.