



A Balanced Diet

For balancing energy and nutrition

By Calvillo Buffington, Aurora and Lindsay, Anne

WHY DO WE NEED A BALANCED DIET?

A balanced diet gives your body all of the essential nutrients it needs to stay active, healthy and strong. These include carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. These are all found in the foods we eat.

Carbohydrates, protein and fat provide the body with the calories, or energy, that it needs to grow, play, heal and learn. When we don't eat enough carbohydrates, protein and fat, our bodies cannot perform at their best. If we eat more than our bodies need, then we are at risk of gaining extra weight. So, it is good to listen to our bodies' natural cues and eat when we are hungry but stop when we are satisfied.



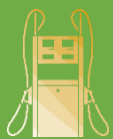
I listen to my body. I eat when I'm hungry and stop when I'm satisfied!

See how these nutrients can help keep your body healthy and strong.

	Carbohydrates	Protein	Fat
What does each nutrient do for me?	<i>Carbohydrates</i> are our body's main source of energy or fuel to run, play, learn, grow and heal. <i>Carbohydrates</i> are also a source of dietary fiber. Fiber helps clean out your intestines and also helps you feel full after meals.	<i>Protein</i> is used to build, repair, and maintain muscles and tissues, such as your skin, hair, nails, muscle, bone and organs. <i>Protein</i> is needed for proper growth and development, especially during childhood, adolescence and pregnancy.	<i>Fats</i> are the most concentrated source of energy we eat. They are a part of every cell in our body. <i>Fats</i> deliver certain vitamins to our body, play a role in our nervous system, and can be found in body hormones.
Which MyPlate group is it?	Grains, Fruits, Vegetables and Dairy.	Protein (meat and plant-based sources) and Dairy.	Protein (meat and plant-based sources) Dairy, and some Vegetables
What are some healthy food choices that contain each nutrient?	Whole grains, such as 100% whole wheat bread, pasta, cereal and rice; and corn or wheat tortillas. Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) dairy products.	Lean meats and poultry, seafood, soy products. Unsalted nuts and seeds, beans and peas. Eggs, fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) dairy products.	Olives, nuts, nut-butters, seeds and avocados. Fish such as salmon or tuna, lean beef and pork, skinless chicken breast, and eggs. Cheese, milk and milk products.



EXTENSION
College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources



**Carbohydrates, proteins and fats
are like gasoline for your car!**



**Vitamins and minerals are
like oil for your car!**

Vitamins and minerals help our bodies work properly. Eating a variety of healthy foods can ensure you get the proper amounts of vitamins and minerals.



VITAMINS

All body processes depend on vitamins. Some vitamins help us grow and heal, while others protect us from infections or help us see better at night. Vitamins A, D, E and K are stored in body fat. But, the body does not store water-soluble vitamins, so eating a diet that restores these vitamins is important.

- Examples of water-soluble vitamins are vitamin C and the B vitamins.
- There are 13 vitamins: vitamins A, C, D, E, K and the B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, vitamin B6, vitamin B12 and folate).

MINERALS

Each mineral has a unique job that helps with our metabolism and other bodily functions.

- There are 16 essential minerals: calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, sodium, chloride, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, manganese, iodine, selenium, molybdenum, chromium and fluoride.

Most children who eat a well-balanced diet receive adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals for healthy growth and development. Children who have restrictive diets, poor appetites, chronic medical conditions, or are picky eaters often develop nutrient deficiencies requiring additional dietary advice from their health care provider.



By choosing to balance and offer foods from each of the MyPlate food groups, you will be more likely to give your bodies the vitamins, minerals and nutrients they need to be healthy, active and strong.

REFERENCES

Lindsay A. P., Madeleine Sigman-Grant, P. R., & Teresa Byington, P. (2016, Dec 5). Lifelong Health and Wellness Series for Childcare Providers. Nutrition: Children Are What They Eat. Nevada: University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

USDA. (2018, June 11). SATURATED, UNSATURATED, AND TRANS FATS. Retrieved from Choose MyPlate: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/saturated-unsaturated-and-trans-fats>.



EXTENSION
College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources



© 2021 University of Nevada, Reno Extension
This material was created for the Healthy Kids Resource Center, extension.unr.edu/healthykids, and funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Extension is an EEO/AA Institution.
A partnership of Nevada counties; University of Nevada, Reno; and U.S. Department of Agriculture.