

What Does Healthy Eating Mean?

Nutrition Notes

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I thought an interesting topic to discuss was how to create a positive environment around eating and how to get kids to eat healthy.

The next question I had to ask myself was what does healthy eating really mean!

So, let's talk about the basics....



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Healthy Eating is simple, or used to be. It refers to eating a variety of foods that provide essential nutrients to maintain good health, feel good and have energy. We are going back to what we learned many years ago; healthy eating is consuming a balance of protein, carbohydrates, fat, water, vitamins and minerals!

Nutrition is important for **EVERYONE!** In combination with being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight, eating well helps your body stay strong. What you eat can affect your immune system, your mood and your energy level. Eating healthy contributes to the probability for better overall good health and a better chance of a longer life. Research has shown that eating healthy can help reduce instances of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Healthy eating can also help to prevent risk factors for disease such as high blood pressure and obesity.

Healthy Eating was simpler many years ago. Our busy lifestyle and our need for convenience has introduced many foods, beverages and trending diets that incorporate ingredients that, if eaten routinely, prove to be not so healthy. Many convenience foods contain lots of sodium, fat, preservatives, which if consumed regularly can increase the likelihood of high blood pressure and obesity and other risk factors.

Healthy isn't lipstick on a pig! I saw this phrase in an article – and I loved it! Think about it...when we were advised to reduce our fat intake, we added products higher in sugar and salt. Salad dressings are a great example. Read those labels! Another example is breakfast cereal – one that is loaded with sugar and salt. No matter how many vitamins, minerals and enrichment is added, the basic character of the product doesn't represent a healthy food. Don't be misled – *it's like putting lipstick on a pig!*

Healthy eating is holistic. As we consider the quality of an individual food, we need to take a look at its overall attributes. To be considered healthy, a food must weigh heavier on beneficial nutrients than those ingredients that offer a liability to our health. Many unprocessed foods readily qualify: fresh

vegetables, fresh fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, plain water. Even though foods like nuts and avocados contain lots of calories, the calories are justified by the concentration of beneficial nutrients! Fresh seafood, eggs, dairy, poultry and meats can be considered **healthy**, but portion sizes and frequency of consumption need to be considered.



Processed foods can only

be considered **healthy** when the overall benefit of the food outweighs the effect of the amount/type of processing. Lastly, we need to be mindful of our planet when consider the healthfulness of our food supply. Minimally processed and foods

that focus on simple, plant-based ingredients tend to have lower carbon footprints and use much less water. Let's look at beef as an example. Beef is a good nutrition source for our bodies; but it's been shown to not be so good for our planet. More water is used to produce beef than for almost

any other food. As we define foods as **healthy** we also need to consider its effect on our environment.

Healthy isn't lipstick on a pig!

Going to back to basics, **healthy eating** really means:

- Choosing foods wisely. Each of us requires a variety of foods that are eaten in a balanced way over an extended period of time.
- Keep portion sizes in check and read those labels! Try not to label foods as “good” or “bad”; any food is ok occasionally! Balance and moderation are key!
- **Healthy eating** is a lifestyle! The secret to long term weight maintenance and good health is to adapt food habits that will work for a lifetime!

Enjoy good health!
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