

# Nutrition

## fact sheet



**T**he hectic lifestyles of both parents and kids often make it difficult for everyone to sit down for a family dinner at home. With homework, after-school activities and parents' work and family-related responsibilities, families have little time to shop for, prepare and sit down to meals at home. As a result, quick-serve dining not only has become a solution for busy lives, but also an integral part of family life.

## Eating Better Together

### A Family Guide for a Healthier Lifestyle

#### *Mealtime Is Important Family Time*

The most important part of family mealtime is simple—it's the family. Eating meals as a family can actually improve children's food habits. Kids tend to eat more fruits, vegetables and dairy foods at meals shared with their parents.

Shared meals have more subtle and long-lasting effects, too. Children learn by modeling themselves after their parents. Eating together lets parents show their children by example how to choose nutritious foods, know when they are full, and how to try new tastes. They also learn valuable social skills like table manners and conversation. Family mealtime can be an important time for talking about the day's events and staying connected with each other.

#### *Follow the Dietary Guidelines*

The suggestions below will help you follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a set of recommendations from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, designed to help Americans

choose the foods they need to support good health.

**Choose a variety of foods** from among the basic food groups while staying within calorie needs. It takes a wide variety of foods to provide all the nutrients we need to stay strong and healthy. The tricky part is getting variety without overeating. That means choosing foods packed with vitamins and minerals at each and every meal. When eating out, balance your meal by choosing from the main food groups: meat, dairy, fruits, vegetables and grains.

**Control calorie intake to manage body weight.** Don't eat more calories than you burn because excess calories are stored as body fat. Choose portion sizes that are right for you, and balance out your food intake with physical activity throughout the day.

#### **Be physically active every day.**

Regular physical activity helps reduce your risk of chronic disease and can help you control your weight. Children need at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on most days to maintain good health

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## Information

American Dietetic  
Association  
Knowledge Center

For food and nutrition  
information or for a  
referral to a nutrition  
professional in your  
area call:

800/366-1655

or visit:

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)



Visit the Wendy's Web site:

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**American Dietetic Association**

Your link to nutrition and health<sup>sm</sup>  
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000  
Chicago, Illinois 60606-6995

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and fitness. To increase physical activity, plan activities the whole family can enjoy, like nature walks, bicycling or practicing soccer drills.

**Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Fruits and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other compounds that contribute to good health. Get more fruit into your child's diet by ordering a side of fruit such as mandarin oranges. Look for salads with dark, leafy greens as their base. These colorful greens are an excellent source of B vitamins and fiber.

**Eat more whole grains and choose more nonfat or low-fat milk** or milk products—preferably three servings of each per day. A whole grain is the entire edible part of any grain such as wheat, oats, barley, rice and corn. Whole grains contain fiber and other beneficial nutrients.

Dairy foods are an excellent source of calcium, protein and other vitamins and minerals important for children's growth and development. Calcium is important at all ages but, especially, for growing bones! Adults and kids need three servings of calcium-rich foods every day.

**Choose fats wisely.** Fat is a nutrient, too, but some fats are better than others. Choose lean meat, chicken and fish and nonfat or low-fat dairy foods. Try to eat more of the good fats like those found in fish and olive oil.

**Choose carbohydrates wisely.** Carbohydrate foods like grains, beans, fruits and some vegetables provide the fuel we need to power us throughout the day. But be smart about your choices. Make sure most of the carbohydrates you eat have plenty of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

**Choose and prepare foods with little salt.** Although it's difficult to control the amount of salt used to prepare foods you eat outside your home, you can minimize your salt intake by not adding more at the table.

### *Meeting Special Dietary Needs*

Family members with special dietary concerns, such as food allergies or diabetes, can still enjoy quick-service meals—just do some homework first. Visit the Web sites of your favorite quick-service restaurants to learn about choices for people with special dietary needs.

### *Tips for Choosing a Restaurant When On the Go*

- Foods should be freshly prepared all day long. Items prepared ahead and stored under a heat lamp lose nutrients as well as quality.
- Similarly, salad items that stand exposed to air and light will lose nutrients and quality. Look for a restaurant that prepares your salad from fresh ingredients.
- Look for menu entrées that are grilled—it generally means that the food was prepared with little or no added fat.
- Be sure to choose a restaurant that offers you a wide range of choices: low-fat dressings, nutritious side dishes, and items that are baked or grilled.
- Ask for nutrition information at your quick-service restaurant. Take advantage of online Web sites that provide complete nutrition information for all menu items.
- Make sure your favorite restaurant offers children's portions. Children's menus provide smaller portion sizes and have been designed to provide ample nourishment for smaller bodies.
- Select colorful fruits and vegetables like spinach, tomatoes and mandarin oranges. The pigments that give these foods their color also have important health benefits.