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Healthy Eating Patterns

By Jackie Billhymer

You hear it all the time. “**Eat your fruits and vegetables.**” You know that they are good for you, but do you know why? Your diet should consist of the key nutrients, vitamins and minerals that a healthy eating pattern provides. The key is eating nutrient-dense foods. Sometimes called “superfoods”, they contain vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats. Choosing nutrient dense foods can help you pack in the most nutrition while staying within your calorie limits.

Every five years, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and of Agriculture (USDA) must jointly publish a report containing nutritional and dietary information and guidelines for the public. The report is required to be based on scientific evidence and the [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) outlines this evidence through its five guidelines and key recommendations. In order to keep this short, I am focusing only on the key recommendations. However, I encourage you to take time to read all five guidelines and the information they provide!

According to the Guidelines, a healthy eating pattern includes (with a few examples):

Variety of vegetables and fruits –

blueberries, goji berries, kale, spinach, legumes, avocados

Whole grains –

oats and quinoa

Low-fat dairy –

Greek yogurt

Variety of protein –

salmon, lean meats, almonds and eggs

Oils –

extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

You should limit saturated and trans fats, added sugars and sodium. Luckily, many of these foods are low in the things you should limit! You can find many examples of [superfoods](#) by searching the web. Do your own research and plan your meals using these guidelines to help you establish a healthy eating pattern for life. ■



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