



# NUTRITION TIPS FOR ALL AGES

*Nutrition is at the core of our overall health. By changing or improving what we eat, our bodies can function more efficiently. Get started with these tips!*

## **Limit Sugar Intake**

According to the American Heart Association, excess sugar consumption is linked to a variety of health problems, including high blood pressure and obesity. Sugar intake for children and adults should be limited to no more than three teaspoons or 12 grams per day.

**Practical steps:** Pay attention to where you may be consuming excess sugar and start cutting back.

- **Read ingredient labels** on packaged and processed foods. Avoid those with hidden sugars such as high fructose corn syrup or sucrose.
- **Eliminate soft drinks**, which can contain up to 13 teaspoons of sugar per can. Water is the best option for every body.
- **Substitute fresh fruit or plain yogurt** for high-calorie desserts, ice cream or flavored yogurt.
- **Don't depend on sugar substitutes.** Most have their own health drawbacks.

## **Avoid Excess Salt**

Reducing dietary salt will lower blood pressure, protecting against heart attack and stroke. The challenge, however, goes well beyond the salt shaker on most dinner tables. In fact, most sodium consumed in the United States actually comes from hidden salt that is added to packaged foods during commercial food processing.

**Practical steps:** Make it your goal to consume no more than one teaspoon (2300 milligrams) of salt per day.

- **Use the Nutrition Facts labels** on packaged foods to compare sodium content. Select the item with the lowest value.
- **Choose "reduced sodium"** or "no salt added" options for canned soups and vegetables.
- **Season your foods** with herbs, spices and citrus instead of salt.
- **Say "no" to salty snacks!** If you're craving crunch, try raw vegetables or raw nuts.

## **Practice Portion Control**

The amount of food we eat is one of the most important factors in establishing and maintaining healthy eating habits and developing a pattern of good nutrition. Achieving a balance between getting the proper nutrients but not too many calories is key.

**Practical steps:** Plan to fill half your plate with lower calorie, high fiber fruits and vegetables and divide the remaining half between a lean meat and healthy starch.

- **Share an entree when eating out** or save half for later. Don't be embarrassed to ask for a "to go" box.
- **Resist the value of larger portions**, and say no to all-you-can-eat options.
- **Use smaller plates and cups**, slow down while you eat and quit before you "feel" full.
- **Don't be distracted while you eat**, which may lead to absentminded over-eating. Pick a place, sit down, and focus on your food.



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