



# Why Eat Healthy?

The importance of nutrition

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



“Eat your fruits and vegetables.” You’ve probably heard this statement since childhood. According to researchers, diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. Not only are they naturally low in fat and calories, but fruits and vegetables also provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health.

## Variety, Balance, and Moderation

- Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products
- Also include low-fat or non-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and legumes
- Drink lots of water and go easy on the salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat
- Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle, that also includes regular physical activity, not smoking, and stress management
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

## Health Benefits

- Decreased risk of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and certain cancers
- Decreased risk of overweight and obesity
- Decreased risk of micronutrient deficiencies

## Know the facts...

- Most packaged foods have a Nutrition Facts label. For a healthier you, use this tool to make smart food choices quickly and easily. Try these tips:
- Keep these low: saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, and sodium
- Get enough of these: potassium, fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron
- Use the % Daily Value (DV) column when possible: 5% DV or less is low, 20% DV or more is high

## Tasty Tips

Incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your diet is easier than you think. Here are a few ideas from the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

### Breakfast

- Have fruit as a mid-morning snack
- Add strawberries, blueberries, or bananas to your waffles, pancakes, cereal, oatmeal, or toast
- Top toasted whole-grain bread with peanut butter and sliced bananas
- Canned, dried, and frozen fruits and vegetables are also good options. Look for fruit without added sugar or syrups and vegetables without added salt, butter, or cream sauces

### Lunch and Dinner

- Add lettuce, tomato, onion, and cucumber to sandwiches
- Choose beans, corn on the cob, or a side salad with low-calorie salad dressing instead of French fries
- Ask for more vegetable toppings (like mushrooms, peppers, and onions) and less cheese on your pizza.
- Order salads, vegetable soups, or stir-fried vegetables when eating out

### Snacks

- Try baked tortilla chips with black bean and corn salsa
- Drink a fruit smoothie made with whole fruit, ice cubes, and low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- Pick up ready-packed salad greens from the produce shelf for a quick salad any time
- Encourage your child to choose his or her own fruit when shopping
- Snack on vegetables like bell pepper strips and broccoli with a low-fat or fat-free ranch dip

See our Healthy Food and Beverages Fact Sheet on [www.shapeupsf.org](http://www.shapeupsf.org).

For more information about food choices and appropriate calories, visit the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 (<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>) and

MyPyramid.gov (<http://www.mypyramid>)

The Shape Up SF Coalition is a driving force creating and promoting safe, healthy eating and active living environments in the City of San Francisco; it is a national model for results-focused community health promotion and improvement. Visit us at: [www.shapeupsf.org](http://www.shapeupsf.org). Contact us at: [shapeup@dcyf.org](mailto:shapeup@dcyf.org) or 415.554.8961. This fact sheet may be downloaded

from [www.shapeupsf.org](http://www.shapeupsf.org)

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/>

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