

Optimal Eating Guidelines



An optimal diet is one that:

- minimizes risk of disease
- treats existing disease
- meets all nutritional requirements

The following guidelines are meant to help you achieve optimal health. Be sure to include variety in your choices to maximize nutrients and other protective dietary components, and also to minimize potential contaminants.

- Whole foods, plant-based diet
 - 7+ servings non-starchy vegetables
 - 3+ servings fruits
 - 3+ servings legumes/legume alternatives
 - 3+ servings grains and/or starchy vegetables
 - 1+ serving nuts and seeds
- Unprocessed or lightly processed foods*
- Minimal refined carbohydrates
- Minimal concentrated sweeteners**
- Minimal ground grains such as flour (intact or cut whole grains are preferred)
- High fiber (35-60+ grams per day), including a variety of fiber-rich foods
- Moderate fat from healthful sources; mainly from whole plant foods (15-25% of calories from fat)

- Minimal added fats or oils***
- Low saturated fat (<5-6% of calories)
- Zero trans fatty acids
- Sufficient omega-3 fatty acids
- Generous inclusion of colorful, anti-inflammatory, phytochemical and antioxidant-rich foods
- Low dietary oxidants
- Low environmental contaminants
- Low glycemic load
- Moderate sodium (< 2300 mg/day; <1500 mg/day for sodium sensitive individuals)
- Organic, where possible
- Nutritionally adequate

*Gentle processing such as blending, grating or other simple methods of food processing are acceptable. Heavily processed foods with added fat, sugar and salt are to be avoided.

** Concentrated sweeteners are minimized, and, if used, are used sparingly for culinary purposes (e.g. 5 ml/1 tsp maple syrup in a sauce or dressing).

***Fats and oils are minimized, and, if used, are used sparingly for culinary purposes (e.g. 5 ml/1 tsp sprayed to prevent sticking; a few drops of sesame oil as a flavoring).