

5 Benefits of Proper Nutrition

Proper nutrition helps prevent disease.

Eating a proper, nutritious diet offers numerous health benefits that keep you mentally and physically well. Proper nutrition doesn't mean starving yourself, but instead means eating a diet balanced in lean proteins, carbs and fats. MayoClinic.com recommends getting between 45 and 65 percent of your daily calories from carbohydrates, between 10 and 35 percent of daily calories from protein and between 20 and 35 percent of daily calories from fats.

Heart Health

A diet low in fats, cholesterol and sodium can lower your risk of heart disease. The types of fat in your diet play a major role in your level of risk. Saturated and trans fats -- commonly found in red meats, fried foods, coconut oils, palm oils, margarines and packaged snack foods -- increase your risk and should be avoided. Diets that reduce your risk of heart disease are rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy. Aim for four to five servings of fruits and four to five servings of vegetables per day.

Bone and Teeth Strength

A diet rich in calcium keeps your bones and teeth strong and helps prevent bone loss associated with osteoporosis. Low-fat dairy products, such as milk, cheese and yogurt; dark green vegetables, such as bok choy and broccoli; and fortified foods, such as soy products, fruit juices and cereals are good sources of calcium. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily for average adults ages 19 to 50. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium; choose products fortified with vitamin D to balance your nutrition.

Energy

Increased energy levels are the immediate benefits of switching to a healthy diet. Eliminating excess fats, sugars and refined carbohydrates helps prevent blood sugar fluctuations. Examples of refined carbohydrates include candy and white breads. Unprocessed carbohydrates including whole grains, fruits and vegetables are most nutritious. This allows you to maintain steady blood sugar and constant energy levels as a result. Small, frequent meals also help maintain energy. In addition, eating a healthy breakfast helps keep you energized throughout the day. The American Council on Exercise recommends breakfasts, such as oatmeal with fruit, or a light sandwich.

Brain Health

Proper nutrition increases blood flow to your brain, protecting brain cells and helping to prevent Alzheimer's disease. For a brain healthy diet, avoid fried foods and favor baked, steamed and grilled foods. Also, eat dark fruits and vegetables such as kale, spinach, broccoli, prunes, raisins, blueberries, raspberries, plums and cherries. Almonds, walnuts, pecans and other nuts are great sources of vitamin E, which along with other vitamins, also helps fight Alzheimer's disease.

Weight Control

To prevent weight gain, you must eat no more calories than you burn each day. For weight loss, you must eat fewer calories than your body burns daily. Healthy and nutrient-dense foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, typically contain fewer calories than sodas, sweets and fast food meals. Shedding excess pounds reduces your risk of obesity-related conditions such as type-2 diabetes, clogged arteries and thyroid dysfunction.