



# May 2007— Healthy Living

## Eating Better Together A Family Guide for a Healthier Lifestyle

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### *Mealtime is Family Time*

*The most important part of family mealtime is simple—it's the family. Eating meals as a family can improve children's food habits. Eating together lets parents show their children by example how to choose nutritious foods, know when they are full, and how to try new tastes. Family mealtime can be an important time for talking about the day's events and staying connected with each other.*

#### **Follow Dietary Guidelines**

The suggestions below will help you follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

**Choose a variety of foods** from among the basic food groups while staying within calorie needs. It takes a variety of foods to provide all the nutrients we need to stay healthy.

**Control calorie intake to manage body weight.** Don't eat more calories than you burn because excess calories are stored as body fat. Choose portion sizes that are right for you.

**Be physically active every day.** Regular physical activity helps reduce your risk of chronic disease and can help you control your weight.

**Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Fruits and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other compounds that contribute to good health.

**Eat more whole grains and choose more nonfat or low-fat milk** or milk products. A whole grain is the entire edible part of any grain such as wheat, oats, barley, rice and corn. Dairy foods are an excellent source of calcium, protein and other vitamins and minerals important for children's growth and development. Calcium is important at all ages but, especially, for growing bones!

**Choose fats wisely.** Choose lean meat, chicken and fish and nonfat or low-fat dairy foods. Try to eat more of the good fats like those found in fish and olive oil.

**Choose carbohydrates wisely.** Carbohydrate foods like grains, beans, fruits and some vegetables provide the fuel we need to power us throughout the day. Make sure most of the carbohydrates you eat have plenty of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

**Choose and prepare foods with little salt.** Minimize your

salt intake by not adding more at the table.

#### **Choosing a Restaurant**

##### **When On the Go**

■ Foods should be freshly prepared all day long. Items prepared ahead and stored under a heat lamp lose nutrients as well as quality.

■ Look for a restaurant that prepares your salad from fresh ingredients.

■ Look for menu entrées that are grilled—it generally means that the food was prepared with little or no added fat.

■ Be sure to choose a restaurant that offers you a wide range of choices: low-fat dressings, nutritious side dishes, and items that are baked or grilled.

■ Ask for nutrition information at your quick-service restaurant.

■ Make sure your favorite restaurant offers children's portions.

## Calcium and Vitamin D: Essential Nutrients for Bone Health

Building strong bones is a lot like building a healthy balance in your "calcium bank account." Bones are living tissue and are making calcium deposits and withdrawals daily. Vitamin D is also essential for strong bones. Your body needs it for optimum bone strength and to help absorb calcium. However, most people are not getting enough of either nutrient. Bones need continuing maintenance or they can weaken and break. If your diet is low in calcium, your body will take calcium from your bones to keep blood calcium at normal levels. For healthy bones:

- consume 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products every day.
- supplement your diet with calcium-fortified foods and beverages
- follow a healthy plan using the MyPyramid Food Guidance system

- be physically active with weight bearing exercise like walking, running or weight training.

Dietitians recommend food as the primary source of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, such as calcium and vitamin D. Dairy products, fortified cereals and orange juice are good sources of calcium and vitamin D.

Calcium is absorbed best if your intake is spread out during the day. For all sources of calcium, adequate vitamin D from food or sunlight is necessary to help the absorption.

A registered dietitian can help you choose foods to meet your individual calcium and vitamin D needs, while keeping in mind that calcium intake should not exceed 2,500 milligrams per day.