



## Putting The Guidelines Into Practice - Choosing Sensibly

March is National Nutrition Month and there are many places to **start** making new choices for good health. You don't need to do it all at once. Learning more about what's in the food you eat can help guide your choices. Focus on limiting fat, sugar, salt and alcohol consumption through moderation and balance. This is the third of a series of articles on the ABC's of nutrition for your health of your family...Choosing Sensibly.



### ***Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in fat.***

You need some fat in the foods you eat because fats supplies energy, essential fatty acids, and helps absorb fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Eating too much fat provides excess calories and increases the risk of coronary heart disease. Aim for a total fat intake of less than or equal to 30 percent of calories from fat.

Foods high in saturated fat include high-fat dairy products (cheese, whole milk, cream, butter and regular ice cream), fatty fresh, processed meats, the skin and fat of poultry, lard, and palm and coconut oils. Foods high in dietary cholesterol include liver and other organ meats, egg yolks and dairy fats. Hydrogenated vegetable oils, such as hard margarine and shortening, are common in commercially fried foods and some bakery products, and are high in trans fatty acids. They are like saturated fat.

### ***Choose beverage and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.***

Sugar is a type of carbohydrate and a source of energy. Sugar and complex carbohydrate starch are naturally found in many foods that supply other nutrients. Some examples are milk, fruits, some vegetables, breads, cereals and grains. Sugar can also be *added* in the processing or preparation of many foods and beverages which add calories and provides few vitamins and minerals. Major sources of added sugars include soft drinks, cakes, cookies, fruitades and fruit-flavored drinks (fruit punch and lemonade), alcoholic mixed drinks, dairy desserts, and candy.

### ***Choose and prepare foods with less salt.***

Salt is a main source of sodium in foods. Many people can reduce their chances of developing high blood pressure by consuming less salt. High salt intake also increases the amount of calcium excreted in the urine. Healthy children and adults need to consume *less than* ¼ teaspoon of salt daily to meet their sodium needs. One teaspoon of salt is equivalent to approximately 2,400 mg of sodium.

The majority of the salt in your diet comes from salt added during food processing (i.e. canned food, TV dinners) or during preparation at home or in a restaurant. Some people add salt or salty



seasonings like shoyu or ketchup at the table. By reducing the amount of salt over time, your desire for salt may decrease. Fresh or frozen foods are generally lower in salt than most canned and processed forms. Look for foods labeled “low-sodium” which contains 140 mg or less of sodium per day.

***If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.***

**Suggested actions for Choosing Sensibly:**

- Limit the use of solid fats, such as butter, hard margarines, lard, and partially hydrogenated shortenings. Use vegetable oils as a substitute.
- Choose fat free or low-fat dairy products, lean meats and poultry.
- Eat cooked dry beans, peas and fish more often.
- Eat plenty of whole grain products, vegetables and fruits daily.
- Use the Nutrition Facts Label as a guide to help you choose foods lower in total fat, saturated fat, as well as cholesterol, sugar and sodium.
- Limit your intake of beverages and foods that are high in added sugars. Do not let soft drinks or sweets take the place of milk and other nutritious foods your body needs.
- Use herbs, spices, and fruits to flavor food and decrease the amount of salty and sweet seasoning by half.
- If you eat at a restaurant or fast food places, choose items that are prepared with only moderated amounts of salt or salt flavorings.
- Choose whole grains, fruits, and vegetables often. They contain very little sugar and salt (unless added during processing or preparation).
- Drink in moderation; one drink per day for women or two per day for men.
- Choose water often.



What will you do as part of Nutrition Month? Select *one* “action for choosing sensibly” that you would like to start with. The choices you make today can have an important influence on the health of you and your family in the future.

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