



WOMEN'S HEALTH

The Basics Of Good Nutrition

(NAPS)—Women often feel too busy to eat right, but sacrificing good nutrition can lead to a myriad of health problems. Fast food, which is often easier to pick up than preparing a healthy meal at home, is usually high in fat and calories and low in other nutrients. In addition, society's view that being fit means being thin, can lead to unhealthy dieting. Eating right means including the right amounts of the right kinds of food in your diet, and a few simple changes can make a big difference.

The Balancing Act

"There's no big secret to eating a balanced diet," says Dr. Pamela Peeke, medical advisor to the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) and author of *Fight Fat After 40*. "It comes down to basics that most women probably already know."

Peeke suggests eating a varied diet that includes plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits, and limits the intake of saturated and non-saturated fats, cholesterol, sugars and salt.

"Selecting smaller amounts of food from the milk, bean and meat group can help control the amount of fat a woman has in her diet, and also lets her save room for larger portions of fruits and vegetables," says Peeke.

In addition, she recommends drinking plenty of water—at least eight 8-ounce glasses a day, and more if you exercise frequently.

Necessary Nutrients

"There are certain nutrients that women—especially those of child-bearing age—should make an effort to include in their diet," says Peeke. "A woman who includes these nutrients in her diet may help to ward off health problems later in life, as well as more immediate conditions."

Peeke recommends every woman get adequate amounts of calcium (ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams a day, depending on age). Calcium-rich foods



Good nutrition is a key component of a woman's total health picture.

can help strengthen bones and fight osteoporosis.

Peeke also recommends eating foods high in fiber to help decrease the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer and to increase digestive functioning. While the recommended daily amount is 25 milligrams of fiber, most women only get about 12 milligrams daily. "Fiber intake should be increased incrementally, to avoid shocking the digestive system," warns Peeke.

Everyone, especially teenage girls, needs iron in their diet. Iron sources include poultry, red meat, legumes, dried fruit and dark leafy vegetables. Peeke recommends including 18 milligrams of iron in a 2,000 calorie diet.

The Role Of Supplements

According to Peeke, women of child-bearing age should take folic acid supplements to reduce the risk of having a pregnancy affected by neural tube defects. In addition, she recommends vegetarians and vegans take supplements to replace nutrients they are not getting from animal products.

Before starting any diet or supplement program, it is important that women consult their health-care professional.

For more information on nutrition and other women's health issues, visit NWHRC's Web site at www.healthywoman.org, or call toll free 1-877-986-9472.