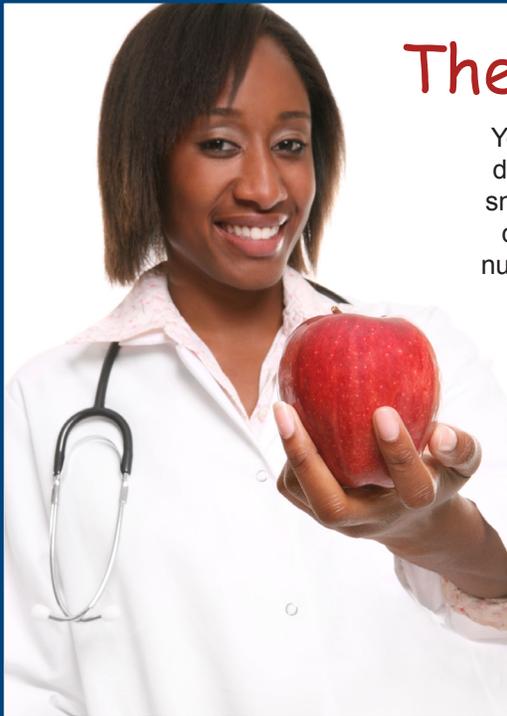




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WELLNESS WEEKLY



The Effects of Poor Nutrition

You know why you should eat healthy, but do you know what might happen if you don't? Sure, one meal through the drive-thru won't change much, and occasional snacking won't hurt you. But, a continual diet of non-nutritious and fattening foods can wreak havoc on your body and your life. Balanced meals give your body the nutrients it needs. Good nutrition keeps your heart beating, your muscles working, your mind racing, and your bones strong. Nutrients also regulate your body processes, which can greatly reduce problems like high blood pressure.

With that in mind, did you know you're much less likely to be plagued by disease if you consistently eat healthy? Eating right can reduce your risk of:

- Heart disease and stroke
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain cancers

Controlling your blood sugar can help you manage diabetes and following a high-fiber, low-fat, low-cholesterol diet can keep your cholesterol levels in check. If you're at risk for high blood pressure, try to follow these tips to reduce your risk:

- Eat at least nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Eat foods low in fat, especially saturated fat.
- Eat three servings of dairy products a day. Make sure to get the low-fat variety!
- Reduce the amount of salt in your diet.

Why cut the fat?

Saturated fats and trans fats can raise your LDL, the bad cholesterol, which you want to keep low. LDL cholesterol can also clog your arteries, which may lead to heart attack or coronary artery disease. Your body does need some fat and cholesterol to work properly. Fat provides energy and is part of the membranes in cells and nerves. HDL cholesterol helps keep your arteries clean and unclogged. Just remember not to go overboard with your fat consumption.

Use these tips to replace unhealthy, fatty options with healthier choices:

- Meat – Stay away from fat-logged meats like sausage and hot dogs. Use low-fat ground meats, trim off visible fat before cooking, remove the skin off of poultry, and buy fat-free or low-fat lunch meat.
- Dairy – Use low-fat or fat-free milk, cheeses, and yogurt.
- Eggs – Use egg whites without the yolk.
- Fats and Oils – Use canola oil, olive oil, or peanut oil instead of butter, lard, shortening, or bacon fat.
- Breads and Cereals – Go for the whole grain option as often as possible.
- Fruits and Vegetables – Fresh fruits and veggies are extremely healthy. If you have to buy canned fruits, stay away from those in heavy, sugary syrup.
- Sweets – Chocolate, ice cream, and cakes should be replaced with fruit, frozen yogurt, and pastries made with unsaturated fats. These tips not only reduce fat consumption, but keep you healthy too. Fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products can also lower your blood pressure. Above all, just try to keep balance, variety, and moderation as you plan your meals.