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# Food and Sleep

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Eat it Up! Nutrition Counselling

The sleep and health connection is understood now more than ever before. The right type and amount of sleep facilitates your body's ability to balance hormones, including those related to hunger and fullness (see handout: *Mindful Eating*). Sleep also plays a role in muscle repair, stress management, and cascade of other body functions.

When your body doesn't get the rest it needs, it is more difficult for you to:

- Make decisions, including those related to healthy food and physical activity. These decisions affect your body's insulin response and subsequently your body's ability to store and release energy.
- Rely on your hunger and fullness cues due to the disruption of leptin and ghrelin; two powerful hormones that regulate hunger and satiety.

These two factors, among others, affect your body's ability to maintain its balance between storing and mobilizing food energy; making it impossible to lose weight.

Whether you are trying to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight, enjoying foods that nourish and protect your body help you stay well and enhance your vitality.

Here's what you can do...

## Choose brightly coloured fruits and vegetables.

Vegetables and fruit, whether they are fresh, frozen or canned are nutritious and delicious. Most Canadians do not eat the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit each day. Begin your day with a serving of fruit or veggies: a handful of spinach in an omelette or a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of berries in a smoothie starts your day off in the right direction. Depending on your age and sex you might need anywhere from 7-10 servings of veggies and fruit each day. Don't let the number scare you off – they add up fast. Just a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cut up veggies or fruit or juice equals one serving; a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked leafy veggies (or 1 cup raw leafy veggies) counts as a serving.

## Reach for whole grains.

According to Canada's Food Guide, adults need between 6-8 servings of grain products each day. A serving of grain equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked pasta or rice; 1 slice of bread;  $\frac{1}{2}$  a bagel, pita or tortilla;  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup oatmeal or 30 g of cold cereal. Like vegetables and fruit, servings of grain products add up fast! Choose a variety of grains (like oats, quinoa, spelt, wild rice, and wheat). Choosing brown rice over white rice and whole wheat pasta over enriched white pasta gives you more fibre and better nutrition. The fibre aids in bowel health and lowers cholesterol but also helps to slow the rate of absorption of sugar into the blood stream. When enjoying grains be sure to team them with a lean protein choice and/or healthy fat e.g. a whole grain bagel with chicken breast with a tablespoon of low fat spread and avocado slices or pasta with tomato sauce. For more information on the glycemic index

## Enjoy lean protein.

Saturated fats, found in animal products, raise cholesterol and increase inflammation in the body. Decrease the amount of saturate fat in your diet by purchasing lean meats, removing the visible fat from meat and the skin from poultry and choose lower fat dairy foods and beverages. Adults need 2-3 servings of meat and alternatives each day. A serving is equal to 75 grams (2 1/2 ounces) of cooked meat, fish, shellfish and poultry; 1/2 cup beans or tofu; 2 eggs; 2 tablespoons of nut butter or 1/2 cup of shelled nuts or seeds.

## Chose fats and oils wisely.

Limit total added fat to 2-3 tablespoons per day. For healthy fats, choose non-hydrogenated margarines, vegetable oils like soy, olive and canola; and nuts and seeds. Limit the amount of mayonnaise, spreads, hard margarines, shortening, lard and butter you add to food or use in baking. Many recipes allow for a reduction in fat or a substitution with fruit purees. Avoid trans fats found in commercially prepared products (listed as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils in the ingredient list).

## Be sure to include calcium containing foods and beverages everyday.

Protect your bones with calcium-containing foods and beverages like milk, fortified soy beverage, yogurt and cheese. Milk and soy beverage also contain vitamin D, a nutrient important for health. Adults need 2-3 servings from Milk and Alternatives each day. A serving is equal to 1 cup of milk or fortified soy beverage; 1/2 cup of yogurt; or 50 grams (1 1/2 ounces) of cheese.

### Other Tips:

- Eat breakfast within 2 hours of waking
- Include items from 3 of the 4 food groups as outlined in Canada's Food Guide for meals and items from 2 of the 4 for snacks. This provides your body with a blend of nutrients and more sustained energy.
- Drink water throughout the day. If you are drinking only when thirsty, you are likely dehydrated.
- Enjoy regular physical activity as directed by your health provider. Some people find that eating or exercising too closely to bedtime affects their sleep quality. Consider if this rings true for you.

Remember certain foods and beverages; including caffeine and alcohol, can also affect your body's ability to fall and stay asleep. Talk to your doctor whether or not these foods or beverages are considered safe for you.

### Helpful Resources and Links:

Health Canada  
Food and Nutrition Page - Eating Well with  
Canada's Food Guide  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php)

Public Health Agency of Canada  
Canada's Physical Activity Guide  
to Healthy Active Living  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/index-eng.php)

Dietitians of Canada  
Your Health  
[www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health.aspx](http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health.aspx)

Canadian Diabetes Association  
The Glycemic Index  
[www.diabetes.ca/files/glycemicindex\\_08.pdf](http://www.diabetes.ca/files/glycemicindex_08.pdf)

HealthLink BC  
Online health information, handouts and  
toll free health information line  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)  
Toll free: 8-1-1

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