

What should you eat to stay healthy?

The life expectancy, average body size, and general good health of the American population seem to indicate that most diets are adequate. Foods we have to choose from are varied, plentiful, and wholesome. Even so, every day someone is trying to tell us what we should and should not eat.

Much of this information is confusing. Some confusion exists because no one knows enough about nutrition to formulate an "ideal" diet for each individual. We all are different and our food needs differ depending on age, sex, size, activity, and conditions such as illnesses.

With certain chronic conditions, diet may be important—heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, tooth decay, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancer. However, we need more research about the role of diet in these diseases.

So, what about advice for today? Seven dietary guidelines have been established for healthy people who want to reduce their risk of these chronic diseases and diseases caused by nutritional deficiencies. These guidelines tell how to choose and prepare foods for you and your family. This advice is the best we can give based on the information we have now.

Two of the guidelines form the basic ingredients for a good diet. *Eat a variety of foods* and *balance the food you eat with physical activity to maintain or improve your weight*. The

five other guidelines describe special characteristics of good diets. They encourage you to get adequate carbohydrates and fiber and avoid too much fat, cholesterol, sugar, sodium, and alcohol.

Food alone won't guarantee good health. But good eating habits can help maintain and even improve your health.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System offices are located in every county in Alabama. Information about buying and eating the right foods is available from your county Extension office. If you would like information on the dietary guidelines, on preparing food for better health, or on buying foods and understanding food labels, contact your county Extension office. The address of your county office is listed on the other side.

Recipe for Good Health

Dietary Guidelines For Alabamians

- Eat a variety of foods.
- Balance the food you eat with physical activity—maintain or improve your weight.
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits.
- Choose a diet moderate in sugars.
- Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

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Alabama Cooperative Extension System



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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