

Eight Tips for Healthier Eating

- 1) **Eat Breakfast.** The first meal of the day shifts our bodies from the resting state to an active state. Research shows that people who eat breakfast are more alert at school and work, have higher intakes of vitamins and minerals and have lower body weights. Don't be skimpy - eat at least 25% of your daily calories for breakfast. Best choices - whole grain cereals or breads, fruit, fat-free milk or yogurt, nuts, eggs.
- 2) **Don't skip meals.** You need fuel coming in all day long. Eat three small to moderate sized meals plus a few small snacks for maximal energy all day. Skipping meals generally leads to over-eating later on in the day or night. Avoid going to the supermarket when you are hungry - everything will appeal to you!
- 3) **Make your house and workplace healthy-eating environments.** Refined and processed foods are often **high in fat**, sugar, calories and sodium and **low in** vitamins and minerals. Replace chips, snack crackers, cookies, candy and baked goods with fresh fruit, low-fat yogurt, fresh veggies, light popcorn.
- 4) **Drink fewer calories.** Regular pop, "fruit" and coffee drinks with added sugars, and alcoholic beverages can add a lot of calories with little nutrition. Also, they have no "filling" effect. Choose more water (if you miss carbonation, buy carbonated water), low-fat milk, black or green tea, latte or cappuccino with low-fat milk. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation (no more than 1 drink/day for women and 2 drinks/day for men).
- 5) **Start cooking more and eating out less often.** It is well-documented that people eat healthier at home. Restaurant portions are too large and most meals contain too much fat (from added cheese, butter, or cooking methods) and too few vegetables, fruits and whole grains. One fast-food or restaurant meal can have most of the calories you need for the entire day. Buy yourself a new cookbook - there are many great choices with quick, tasty and healthy recipes. When eating out, watch the portion size - split a meal or take half home for the next day. You'll save money and eat better.

6) **Make your diet colorful.** Every plate of food should have at least three different colors on it, preferably bright ones such as red, orange and green. The colors in fruits and vegetables are the different phytochemicals in these foods. Phytochemicals are naturally-occurring plant substances that fight diseases.

7) **Try to eat more whole grain breads, cereals, pastas and rice.** When choosing bread, pasta or crackers look for the words "whole wheat" on the label to get more dietary fiber and nutrients. Cereals should have 4 grams or more of fiber per serving. Brown rice is a healthier choice than white. "White carbohydrates" are less filling and satisfying than their browner counterparts.

8) **Make eating a pleasurable experience.** Food is more than just nourishment for our bodies; it is one of life's greatest pleasures. "Slow Food" is an organization (www.slowfood.com) that believes meals are meant to be enjoyed rather than just swallowed; and people would get more out of preparing their own food rather than always having strangers prepare it. A few guidelines to help you enter the *slow food state of mind* are:

- ❖ eat in a pleasant environment (not the car or standing at the kitchen sink)
- ❖ try and eat at a relaxed pace so you can experience the sensual qualities of the foods (aroma, taste, texture, temperature)
- ❖ eat when you are "gently" hungry rather than "frantically" hungry so you can savor your food
- ❖ only eat what you really like rather than eating something because it's there
- ❖ enjoy the time spent with your meal companions

For more information, contact Pauline Genter, MS, RD, LD at Student Health Services, Pauline.genter@mnsu.edu or 389-5689, ext. 239.