

Total Daily Calorie Needs

*Recommended number of food group servings depends on your calorie needs:

- 1600 calories is about right for children ages 2 to 6 years, many sedentary women, and some older adults.
- 2200 calories is about right for most children over 6, teen girls, active women, and many sedentary men.
- 2800 calories is about right for teen boys and active men.

Whole Grains:

Children ages 6-9 should aim for 4-7 servings daily

Children ages 10-14 should aim for 5-8 servings daily

Teens ages 14-18 should aim for 6-9 servings daily

Whole grains include, oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat bread/tortillas/pitas, whole grains like quinoa, millet, bulgur, buckwheat and barely, whole grain cereals (look for fiber higher than 2 grams), whole wheat pasta and other whole grain breads. Refined grains, such as white flour, white pasta and white rice should be limited to 3-4 times a week.

Vegetables

4-9 servings daily

The more the better, just as long as smaller kids save room for protein and fats, as well. When it comes to vegetables, go for a variety of colors on your plate. Eating a variety of colored vegetables, such as green, orange, red, purple/blue, yellow or white, will ensure that children are getting all the vitamins and minerals they need and a number of healthy protective factors from the plants' coloring, as well. Fresh and in season is always best. Organic is ideal, but the most important thing is to simply eat those veggies — in any form. Some kids need to see or try a vegetable 8-9 times before they accept it, so don't give up. Also, watch out for the starchy vegetables. While potatoes and corn have some nutrients, they have much less than most vegetables and are more like carbohydrates nutritionally. If potatoes or corn is served, a grain is not needed. Leave skin on potatoes for extra nutrients.

Fruits

3-5 servings daily

Again, look for color, color, color. Fresh is always best over canned and syrupy fruits. Aim for a wide variety of fruits. While fruits are extremely healthy, it still can not be eaten unlimitedly as vegetables, as they do contain significant calories and sugars.

Protein and Healthy Fats

2-3 servings daily

Healthy protein sources include nuts, beans, tofu, fish (wild is better than farm-raised), eggs, chicken, turkey, lean pork, lamb. Be aware that a portion of protein is quite small: 2-3 ounces for meat and a ½ cup of cooked beans, 1/3 cup of nuts or one egg counts as

one ounce of meat. In this category we also included healthy fats. With this in mind, we hope you stress the nuts, beans, soy and fish as they contain heart healthy fats. Fats coming from olive oil and avocados are also healthy. When looking for healthy fats, reduce or eliminate any foods with hydrogenated fats and reduce greatly foods with saturated fat.

Red Meat

2-3 servings per week

Red meat was separated out from the proteins, not to encourage you to eat it, but to set it apart from the rest, as it should not be eaten every day. In this category would also be bacon, ham, sausage, salami, bologna and hot dogs (unless 100% beef, turkey or vegetarian and low fat). These meats contain a large proportion of saturated fat and should be eaten in moderation for heart health.

Calcium

2-3 servings daily

This category replaces what traditionally is the dairy group. There are many sources of calcium that come from plants that are even more absorbable than the calcium in dairy. These food include nuts, such as almonds, broccoli, dark leafy greens (add some lemon to help free up the calcium), tofu, soy milk, sardines, beans, sunflower seeds and molasses. When getting calcium from dairy, the best source is organic yogurt, the next best is low-fat organic milk and other low fat organic dairy products. One organic switch that is really important to make is to organic milk. Milk carries a lot of toxins and residues of conventionally raised cows, if nothing else in your house is organic, but milk, you are still doing your family a great service. If you must eat dairy, please choose organic.

Added sugars and Fats

To be eaten rarely

Much of today's obesity crisis stems from a lack of exercise and heavy eating of food of minimal nutrition value. Foods with a large amount of added sugars, such as candy, soda, cakes, pies and cookies, should be limited to treats. For very active kids, a daily treat, in moderation can be part of a healthy diet. Kids who are not as physically active should really limit high sugar foods and beverages to a few times per week. Added fats, especially hydrogenated fats should be reduced significantly. The goal for hydrogenated fats or trans-fatty acids should be to eliminate them all together. This may require reading the ingredients on store-bought food and avoiding hydrogenated margarines. Saturated fats, such as butter, should be limited to a few times per week. Added fats from healthy sources, such as olive oil, are an important part of a healthy diet and should be used daily.

Water: the water glass on the plate represents the most important part of the healthy plate. Hydration, especially for growing kids is so important to total body and brain health. 8 glasses a day should be a goal for water drinking skeptics and a minimum for experienced water drinkers. Remember water is best. When drinks are high in sugar, the body can not get enough water from the beverage...so go for the water. Kids often drink more water if they are able to carry a water bottle at school.