

Healthy Living

We all know a healthy diet is an important part of maintaining a healthy kosher lifestyle. A healthy spectrum should be a third diet, a third exercise and a third rest.

In this installment I shall be talking you through the basic elements of diet as well as going through different myths and tips to help you boost your health.

First of all, food can be grouped into 4 different categories, each having benefits and cautions. Fat, Carbohydrates, Protein and Vitamins/Minerals, a lot of food can be found to be rich in two or more of these different groups so I will group them as best as possible.

Fat: As a nation we eat too much fat, however fat is necessary for a well balanced diet. There are 3 main types of fat, saturated fat, polyunsaturated fat and mono-unsaturated fat.

Saturated fats: These generally increase total cholesterol and LDL (bad) cholesterol, hence increasing your risk of a heart attack. These are generally found in dark meat or dairy products particularly cheese. Polyunsaturated fats: These include omega 3 and 6. Omega 6 is found in margarine and spreads such as sunflower spread. These can help reduce total cholesterol.

Omega 3: is found in oily fish such as salmon or trout as well as nuts including walnuts and linseeds. It is recommended to only have a maximum of two portions of oily fish a week due to the high mercury content found in the larger fish.

Mono-unsaturated fats: These are the BEST type of fats and are heavily used in Mediterranean diets. Foods to look out for include extra virgin olive oil and rapeseed oil. These fats help to reduce overall cholesterol.

In summary mono-unsaturated fats should take preference over most others, so when you're cooking try using olive oil over butter or sunflower oil

Carbohydrates: Carbohydrates or carbs can also be split up into simple (sugary) and complex (starchy). Carbs provide you with energy and a vital to any workout regime as well as everyday life. It is recommended you eat more carbs on workout days. Carbs should be eaten earlier in the day when they are most likely to be used as an energy source.

Complex carbs: The foods in this group may also be referred to as 'starchy' foods. It is one of the great dieting myths that 'starchy foods' make you overweight. However when this was looked at it became apparent that it wasn't the starchy foods that made people overweight, but what was put on it. For example it is the smothering of butter and cheese that makes a baked potato a high fat meal, not the actual potato. Complex carbs include bread, potatoes, pasta and rice, as well as most vegetables and you should eat between 4 - 6 portions of carbs a day. Try to substitute white versions for brown to improve carb quality and fibre intake. For example try sweet potatoes instead of regular. This will stop any insulin spike, and as it is sweeter than normal potato doesn't require any fatty additions such as butter or cheese. Starchy foods are a source of complex carbohydrate, fibre, and B vitamins. They may also provide calcium, iron, copper & Vitamin E.

Simple Carbs: Sugar is a concentrated source of energy (calories). These are often referred to as empty calories and this is because sugar contains no significant amounts of any other nutrient, vitamin or mineral! Foods in this group include chocolate, sweets, biscuits, cakes & many fizzy drinks. Fruit naturally contains sugar, however it is not at the high level that is used in manufactured foods. Also fruit is a good source of vitamins and soluble fibre, hence fruit tends to be a good naturally sweet, low calorie and healthy snack.

Protein: This is probably one of the most commonly heard words in Kosher Fitness gym. Every day people ask me if protein will make them build muscle. Put simply, no. Protein is essential for growth and muscle repair but to repair muscle it first has to be used. Your body can only take in 23 grams of protein in one serving so if you overload it will simply be excreted. You should aim to have 2/3 portions of lean protein per day. Lean protein can be found in most fish and poultry. Whey protein is the fastest acting for repair and is largely available in powdered supplements for ease of use after exercise. Casein protein takes a bit longer to digest but is still a good source of protein and can be found in milk or cheese.

Vitamins and minerals: Most vitamins are found heavily in fruit and vegetables; it is best to have varying types on your plate. Generally speaking different colour vegetables means different vitamins for example carrots, sweet potatoes and cantaloupe are all high in vitamin A, and are all orange, where as vitamin B veg is usually green, such as peas and spinach and provide a lot of energy. When it comes to vitamins, each one has a special role to play.

For example:

Vitamin D in milk helps your bones

Vitamin A in carrots helps you see at night.

Vitamin C in citrus fruit such as oranges and lemons helps your body heal if you get a cut, they also help when you have a cold

B vitamins are found in leafy green vegetables help your body make protein and energy.

Just like vitamins minerals help your body grow, develop, and stay healthy.

Calcium

helps build bones and teeth and can be found in more dairy products as well as some vegetables such as broccoli.

Iron

helps to transport oxygen and is part of your red blood cells so is very important! It can be found in meat, eggs and beans.

Potassium

keeps muscles working properly by regulating the amount of water in the muscles. It can be found in bananas and dried fruit.

Zinc

helps the immune system fight off illness and infections. It can be found in beef, lamb and beans.

You will notice that some examples occur more than once, in different categories so ensure you maintain a healthy diet and stay topped up on the foods listed here, and drink plenty of water. If you would like more dietary advice or a personalised diet plan please speak to one of our instructors at Kosher Fitness, who are all qualified nutritionists.

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