

## Nutrition Overseas

Transitioning to a new country is tough. You are faced with a new culture, traditions and cuisine. Finding the resources to eating healthy can be difficult, especially if you are unsure what certain foods are or where they come from. Finding a healthy balance in your diet can become easier with education and the proper tools to live by. It doesn't matter what country you are in, these tips can be applied to any type of cuisine, atmosphere, and lifestyle.

### **Let's start with the basics. What exactly IS a healthy diet?**

A healthy diet is a balanced diet. A balanced diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Lean proteins can come from a variety of sources including chicken breast, turkey breast, beef (look for words "round", "loin" or "lean" ground beef), seafood, eggs, nuts, and legumes, also known as beans.

### **What about portion control?**

How much you eat is just as important as what you are eating. It's important to make sure you are getting the proper amounts of healthy foods in your diet to ensure your body is getting all of the nutrients it needs. Your fist is a great guide to help you master portion control.

- Fruits and vegetables = 2 fists. Produce is low in calories and packed with vitamins and minerals necessary for your body to function properly. They should account for about half of your plate.
- Lean proteins = 1 fist. Proteins are the building blocks for our cells and help build and maintain muscle. Proteins should make up about a fourth of your plate.
- Whole grains = 1 fist. Whole grains contain fiber, which help keep you fuller longer. Grains should account for a fourth of your plate. Examples of whole grains include brown rice, rye, and whole-grain bread.
- Dairy = 1 fist. Milk, yogurt, and cheese provide nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and protein that help maintain healthy bones. Include 1 serving with each meal to help make a healthy plate. Go for low-fat options. A serving would equal 1 cup (1 fist) of milk or yogurt, or 2 oz. of cheese (4 dice).

### **How often should I be eating?**

This is a tricky one. The most ideal diet would include 4 or 5 small meals throughout the day. However, this is sometimes unrealistic due to long, busy days. The goal is to listen to your body. Try to at least eat 3 balanced meals a day with a snack in between. A snack can be as simple as a piece of fruit and nuts. Always have something on hand, such as a granola bar or piece of fruit in your bag to help hold you over until your next meal. Try to go no more than 3 or 4 hours without something to eat. This will help prevent overeating

at your next meal and the achy feeling that comes with not eating enough. Always, ALWAYS eat breakfast. Even if you're not hungry or in a rush, something small is better than nothing. It will help you to focus and provide you with the energy you need throughout the day.

### **What should I eat when I am under a lot of stress?**

The best thing to do when stressed is to stick to a balanced diet. Eating foods that are packed with a variety of nutrients will help fuel your brain and body with the energy you need to combat stress. Eat light and small portions so that you are not bogged down with food weight, which will make you feel heavy. Make a conscious effort to eat, even when you don't feel like it. Take a deep breath and grab a snack when you feel the need to recharge. Look for foods that are easily accessible such as fruit or prepackaged snacks. Just make sure to look at the nutrition label to watch out for added sugar and saturated fats. Load up on fiber to feel fuller longer by eating fruits or vegetables with the skin on, or foods that contain whole grains or legumes. Most importantly, stay hydrated! Carry a water bottle with you to help remind yourself to drink water throughout the day.

Avoid foods that contain added sugar and saturated fats. Our body often craves unhealthy foods when we are stressed, but it is important to steer clear of these types of foods. Candy and other foods that have a lot of added sugar will give your body a spike of energy, followed by a hard crash, since your body cannot maintain these sugar spikes over a long period of time. It is important to keep our bodies healthy first, to be able to deal with stressful situations appropriately.

### **What about food safety?**

- Wash your hands frequently. Washing your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds will help prevent the spread of bacteria from your hands to your mouth.
- Always rinse off fruits and vegetables before eating them. This will help to get rid of dirt and bacteria that comes from handling of produce.
- Make sure meat is properly cooked all the way through and "well-done" to avoid the risk of food poisoning.
- If the water is unclean in your area, avoid eating uncooked food such as salads and raw fruits and vegetables.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Ask where the food came from and what is in your meal to help decide if it is safe to eat or not.

Healthy eating in a foreign country can be a challenge. Remind yourself to eat balanced meals with snacks in between to fuel your body with energy for those long, stressful days. How much and when you eat is just as important as what you are eating. Be prepared by always having a snack on hand to help when you don't have time for a full

meal or feel too rushed to find something to eat. Food safety is often a forefront issue when relocating to a foreign country. It is better to be too cautious than not at all to avoid the risk of food poisoning and other food-related illnesses. Use these tips and information to help guide you towards a healthier diet and lifestyle when transitioning to a new country!