

## Importance of Good Nutrition – The Five Basic Food Groups

### Tips to Help Keep Your Health On Track!

Good nutrition is an important component to maintaining your overall health. What can be difficult is sorting through the overload of information available to determine what food choices will help you not only to begin healthier eating habits but maintain them as well. This article, first in a series on good nutrition, is intended to provide a high-level summary of the five basic food groups. Future articles in this series will address each of the food groups separately (dairy will be the next article) to provide you with a basic understanding of the importance of each one in your daily diet. <sup>(1)</sup>

### What are the five basic food groups?

The five basic food groups are dairy, proteins, fruits, vegetables, and grains. Each is briefly described below. <sup>(1)</sup>

Dairy Eat calcium-rich foods	Proteins Eat lean with proteins	Fruits Focus on fruits	Vegetables Vary your veggies	Grains Make half your grains whole
<p>Dairy consists of all fluid milk products and many foods that are made from milk.</p> <p>Milk, cheese, yogurt, lactose-free and lactose-reduced products, and soy beverages fall into this category.</p> <p>Foods not part of this group are those with little or no calcium, even if made from milk, such as butter, cream, sour cream and cream cheese.</p> <p>Try to have at least 3 cups of dairy products every day; for children aged 2 to 8, they should consume at least 2 cups.</p>	<p>Proteins exist as part of all cells, tissues, and organs in your body. They continually break down and are replaced.</p> <p>Proteins in the food you eat are digested into amino acids and used to replace the proteins in your body.</p> <p>Lean meats, poultry, seafood, beans, peas, eggs, processed soy products, unsalted nuts, and seeds represent this food group.</p> <p>Try to have at least 5 ½ oz. of protein each day and, if no allergies to seafood, 8 oz. per week.</p>	<p>Fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories and none contain cholesterol, making them very beneficial to your diet.</p> <p>Fruits contain many nutrients such as potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folic acid, and can be consumed fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.</p> <p>Some foods in this group are apples, apricots, bananas, oranges, strawberries, dates, grapes, and melons, as well as 100% fruit juices.</p> <p>Have at least 2 cups or 2 pieces of fruit daily for an overall well-balanced diet.</p>	<p>Vegetables provide nutrients important for the health of your body and help reduce the risk of chronic diseases.</p> <p>Vegetables contain most of the same nutrients as fruits and can also be eaten fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.</p> <p>Broccoli, collard greens, kale, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, kidney and lima beans, and 100% vegetable juices are examples in this food group.</p> <p>Try to incorporate at least 2 cups of vegetables with a variety of dark green, red, and orange vegetables in your daily diet.</p>	<p>Grains are a good source of fiber and nutrients – either whole or refined. <i>Whole grains</i> have all parts of the grain seed still intact, while <i>refined grains</i> have been processed which means some of the important nutrients and fiber have been removed.</p> <p><i>Whole grains</i> are foods such as whole-wheat bread, whole-grain cereals, crackers, oatmeal, whole-grain pasta, wheat bran, and brown rice. <i>Refined grains</i> include anything white-based such as white bread, white flour, white rice, white pasta, flour tortillas, and most noodles.</p> <p>Try to eat at least 6 oz. of grains each day.</p>

<sup>(1)</sup> [www.cdc.gov/nutrition](http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition)