What to eat? [1]

Dear Alice,

What should I eat?

Answer

Dear Reader,

How's this for a treat? you should eat whatever you want to, just as long as it's in moderation. Eating can be for fuel, but can, and many would argue should, be for pleasure as well. Of course, sometimes you have to take the pleasure with some pain; in this case, better make it whole-wheat pain (French for bread). In addition to whole wheat and whole grain products, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein and low- or non-fat dairy products should also be eaten regularly in order to ensure that you're getting all the nutrients you need from a healthy and balanced diet.

How much of any food group you should eat depends on your age, sex, weight and activity level. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [2], a typical man aged 19-30 should try to eat about 8 ounces of grains, with at least 4 ounces coming from whole grains, 3 cups of vegetables, 2 cups of fruit, 3 cups of dairy products, 6.5 ounces of protein (lean meats and beans) and are allowed 7 teaspoons of foods from the oil group.

A typical woman aged 19 to 30 should try to eat 6 ounces of grains, with 3 ounces coming from whole grains, 2.5 cups of vegetables, 2 cups of fruit, 3 cups of dairy products, 5.5 ounces of protein (lean meats and beans) and can consume about 6 teaspoons from the oil group. With a balanced diet like those described above, men and women can eat still eat sweets and treats in moderation and maintain a healthy diet.

These are only guidelines, which can most certainly be tailored to your activity level, medical history, and/or food likes and dislikes. If you are looking for a specific nutritional plan, it's a great idea to discuss any concerns and thoughts with a health care provider or a registered dietitian.
If this has whetted your appetite to find out more on what and how much of a food constitutes a serving and what group it comes from, you can check out the choosemyplate.gov site. You can also check out Food Guidelines? How much is a serving? [3] in the Go Ask Alice! archives for more information on serving sizes, as well as where to go to learn more about dietary recommendations.

Bon appétit!

Alice!

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