



Keeping a healthy balance

7.3

A balanced diet is essential for good health. The key to making our diet healthy is to eat in moderation from a variety of foods and to balance our choice of food types.

Moderation is important, because over-consumption unbalances the diet and in the case of some nutrients – fat and alcohol in particular – can lead to health problems. As for variety, this not only makes our meals more interesting and enjoyable, but will also help ensure that the requirements for all the micronutrients – vitamins and minerals – are met.

The balance part takes it a stage further and divides the key nutrients up into proportions. For health, over half (55%) of our energy intake should come from carbohydrates, and for regular exercisers this should increase to 60-70%. The bulk of our carbohydrate intake should come from the starchy sources such as bread, breakfast cereals, rice, potatoes and pasta and the remaining from more sugary sources such as sugar, fruit and juices. The rest of the diet should be made up by a bit of protein (around 12-15%) – about half of what many of us usually consume – and some fat (less than 30%).

Reference: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2002). Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids (Macronutrients): A Report of the Panel on Macronutrients, Subcommittees on Upper Reference Levels of Nutrients and Interpretation and Uses of Dietary Reference Intakes, and the Standing Committee on the Scientific Evaluation of Dietary Reference Intakes. The National Academies Press, Washington.



Visit www.sugar-bureau.co.uk,
www.nutrition.org.uk and
www.eufic.org