

The 5 Diet Keys

1. Eat a plant-based diet, with a focus on a variety of fruits, vegetables, and plant-based proteins.

Plant-based diets are usually higher in antioxidants, which are beneficial for cancer protection. This type of diet also increases the amount of fiber in the digestive tract, which has been associated with a decreased risk of several types of cancer, including those of the colon and breast. Remember to “eat the rainbow” and consume a wide variety of both fruits and vegetables to get all the nutrients your body needs.

2. If you eat animal foods, treat them as a condiment and know where they come from.

If you choose to eat meat, it should not take up a large portion of your plate. When there’s less meat on your plate, you will end up including more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These contain antioxidants and higher amounts of fiber compared to meat. If you are going to eat meat or other animal products, choose organic, pastured and grass-fed options as the meat will be higher in omega-3 fatty acids. Remember that most Americans consume much more protein than is needed.

3. Select local and organic foods whenever possible.

Local foods are often fresher and are more flavorful because the food is usually harvested when ripe, as it doesn’t have to be transported long distances. Organic produce contains no synthetic pesticides (except rarely when contaminated by drift from commercial fields.). Pesticides are toxins, and their residues often remain on (and in) the food we eat. Organic foods are also GMO-free, and contain no artificially-altered DNA. Organic foods contain no harmful dyes or preservatives.

4. Reduce added sugar and choose whole grains over refined grains.

Whole grains have more fiber and keep you feeling fuller for longer periods of time. Often this satisfying fullness will lead to you to reduce your calorie consumption throughout the day. Added sugar contributes to the inflammatory processes in the body. It’s important to read labels and avoid added sugar whenever possible. Be wary of low-fat and fat-free products, as they tend to be much higher in sugar or artificial sweeteners, and other additives.

5. Make the time to plan, cook and enjoy your meals.

By planning your menu, you will also be able to plan the time you need to set aside for cooking, and you will have the necessary ingredients on hand. You can also cook extra and freeze it, if you have limited time to cook during the work week. Try not to freeze in plastic. For more on how to maintain a healthy kitchen, please see our Environment module.