

Women have unique nutritional needs. Also, diet plays a strong role in the prevention of heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, and certain types of cancers. Use this guide to see how your own eating habits stack up.



Folate

Folate, also known as folic acid, is critical if you are thinking of becoming pregnant or are in the early stages of pregnancy. Folate is critical during times of rapid cell division. Regular use of aspirin, antacids, oral contraceptives and smoking can all impair folate status.

RDA: 400 micrograms /day

Good Food Sources: Enriched breads and cereals, dark leafy greens, beans, legumes, asparagus, turnip greens, avocado

Soy

While studies suggest that soy may reduce the risk of certain cancers (such as breast and prostate) and menopause symptoms, there are currently no national guidelines for what is a safe and effective amount. However, soy remains an excellent source of high quality protein, and has been shown to lower “bad” cholesterol (the FDA recommends 25 grams of soy protein per day, or 2-3 servings).

Good Food Sources: Tofu, tempeh, roasted soybeans, fortified soy milk, edamame, soy flour

Fiber

Eating plenty of fiber helps to fill you up, reduces constipation, helps improve cholesterol levels, and may reduce the risk of colon cancer. Women may have a hard time meeting their fiber needs if they are restricting their calories, especially if they are on a low-carbohydrate diet.

RDA: 25-35 grams /day

Good Food Sources: Whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, legumes, seeds, nuts

Calcium

Women are at a greater risk of developing osteoporosis than men. Calcium is important in the formation of strong bones and teeth. Excessive intake of protein, sodium, and caffeine can all increase loss of calcium from the body, so consume these in moderation.

RDA:

ages 9-18	1,300 mg/day
ages 19-50	1,000 mg/day
ages 51 +	1,200 mg /day

Good Food Sources: Dairy products (preferably low fat), calcium-fortified orange juice, calcium-fortified soy milk, tofu processed with calcium sulfate, sesame seeds, tahini, almonds, broccoli, collard greens, mustard greens

Iron

Iron plays an important role in bringing oxygen to cells for energy. Women are at risk for iron deficiency during their reproductive years. For this reason, the RDA for iron is 5 mg higher for women than for men (however, if you are anemic, consult your physician, as there may be an underlying cause). Eating vitamin C-rich foods will help to enhance iron’s absorption at meals.

RDA:

ages 19-49	15 mg/day
over 50	8 mg/day

Good Food Sources: Meat (especially lean red meat), fish, poultry, whole grains, fortified breads and cereals, beans and peas, dark leafy greens

Health Check... 5 Strategies For Better Health

1. Eat a diet rich in whole grains, fresh produce, lean proteins, legumes, and heart-healthy fat.
2. Shoot for a minimum of 5-9 servings of fruits and veggies every day.
3. Be sure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet for better bone health.
4. Drink a minimum of 8-10 cups of water every day.
5. Exercise!