

Nutrition after SCI: Overview

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Fact Sheet

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Why is nutrition important after SCI?

Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. After a spinal cord injury (SCI), a healthy diet is especially crucial for five reasons: weight control, pressure ulcer prevention, bowel movement management, urinary tract infections prevention, and bone health (see complementary fact sheets for more information on these topics).

What are the components of a balanced diet?

A healthy diet after SCI will include appropriate amounts of the following nutrients: **protein, carbohydrates, lipids (fats), vitamins, minerals (zinc, calcium, iron), and fluids.**

Proper food choices help with weight management, bowel function, and prevention of chronic illnesses like cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes. Adequate protein intake prevents pressure ulcers and contributes to muscle healing. Dietary fat is essential for insulation against extreme temperatures, maintenance of cell membranes, and prevention of blood clots. Vitamins and minerals are essential to bone health, preventing skin breakdown, and many other functions. Sufficient fluid intake will help to prevent urinary tract infections and improve ease of bowel movements.

Three Principles of a Healthy Diet

A healthy diet consists of three core principles: (1) balancing calories (2) plentiful intake of healthy foods, and (3) minimal intake of convenience and pleasure foods.

Balancing calories: Eat mindfully without multitasking. Pay attention to sensations of fullness throughout the meal. Avoid oversized portions by using smaller plates.

Increasing intake of healthy foods: Half of your plate should have fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli; the other half consists of lean proteins and whole grains, like fish and chicken, and brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat bread. Switching to low-fat milk or dairy alternatives, like soy milk, can reduce your fat and caloric intake.

Reducing intake of convenience & pleasure foods: Choose foods low in sodium, sugar, and fat. Minimize intake of sweetened beverages, soups with excessive salt, and processed foods high in fat, like pizza and sausages.

Useful Resources

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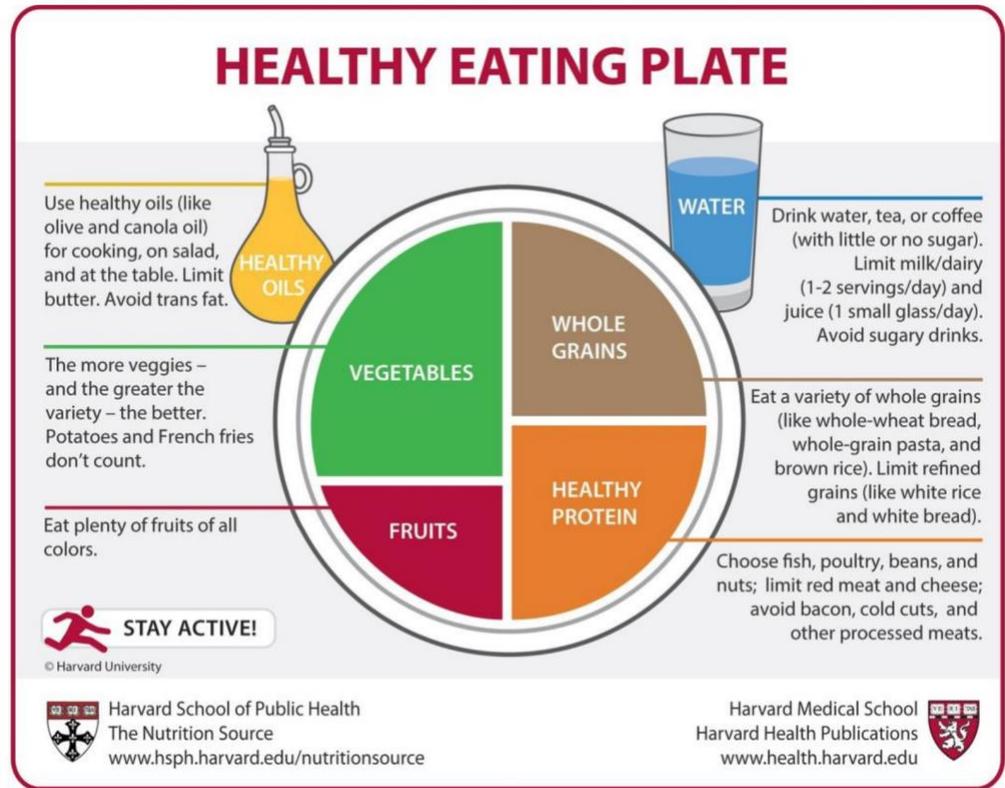
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<https://www.choosemyplate.gov>
www.HealthFinder.gov
<http://sci-health.org> <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/dr-gregers-daily-dozen-checklist/>



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