

Nutritional Benefits of Meat and Poultry

The New Food Pyramid – Where Do Meat and Poultry Fit?

- The new food pyramid, “MyPyramid,” guide was released in 2005.
- The new title for the meat section is “Meats and Beans” and includes meat, poultry, eggs, nuts and seeds, dry beans, fish and shellfish.
- Lean cuts of meat and poultry are recommended.
- Daily serving recommendations are 4 ounces or less for children under age 8, 6 ounces or less for children from 9 to 18 and 6 ounces or less for adults 19 and up.
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans and peas, eggs, nuts and seeds supply many nutrients. These include protein, B vitamins (B1/thiamin, B2/riboflavin, B3/niacin and B6/pyridoxine), vitamin E, iron, zinc and magnesium.
- Proteins function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin and blood. They are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones and vitamins. Proteins are one of three classes of nutrients that provide calories (the others are fat and carbohydrates).

Nutritional Benefits of Dairy

- Milk and dairy products are a good source of calcium, protein, B vitamins and minerals.
- These minerals and vitamins are vital to the health of bones and teeth.
- Only half of children ages 5 and under get enough calcium in their diets.
- Low-fat (1 percent) and skim milk and other low-fat dairy products have little or no fat.

Nutritional Benefits of Eggs

- Eggs are nutrient-rich – they have high-quality protein and 13 essential vitamins and minerals and are only 75 calories a serving.
- Eggs contain folate, a B vitamin that reduces birth defects and cardiovascular disease.
- Next to milk, eggs are one of the best dietary sources of vitamin D, which aids in the absorption of calcium.

Nutritional Benefits of Meat, Poultry and Fish

- Lean meats are a great source of protein, long-chain fatty acids, B vitamins, iron and zinc.
- Lean meats also contain essential nutrients necessary for healthy bodies.
- Iron found in meat is more easily absorbed than the iron found in plant-based foods.
- The minerals and vitamins in lean meats strengthen bones; build, maintain and repair body tissues; help boost the immune system; increase energy; help with digestion, metabolic breakdown and the development of healthy skin; and help metabolize carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

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Nutritional Benefits for Children

- Proper nutrition – like that gained from following the food pyramid and including lean meats, poultry and eggs in diets – can help prevent childhood medical problems like weak bones, obesity and juvenile diabetes.
- Calcium needs are the highest during childhood. It takes more calcium to help maintain proper bone growth and strength.
- Eating habits established in childhood will likely be continued throughout the child's adult life. Choosing and developing healthy eating routines when young will benefit a child their entire life.

Nutritional Benefits for Teens and Adolescents

- Between the ages of 9 and 18, children need higher levels of nutrients like calcium and iron, which are most easily derived from lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy products.
- This period of growth is when children are most susceptible to bad eating habits and when obesity most likely starts.
- Growth rate, degree of physical maturity, body composition and activity levels all affect a teen's caloric needs.
- Out-of-home activity levels increase during this age period, and helping your teen maintain a healthy diet is very important. Encourage your teens to eat three meals a day that include foods from all sections of the food pyramid to ensure proper nutrition and to reduce health concerns.

Food Safety

For information on food safety, visit:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/FoodSafetyPolicy/>