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BALANCED CHOICES
for a healthy lifestyle

Balanced Choices®

For a Healthy Lifestyle

As part of our ongoing efforts to promote a more healthful workplace, *Balanced Choices for a Healthy Lifestyle* was created to educate you about the nutrients found in the foods you choose throughout the day. It is a café-based nutrition education program, guided by the principles of the Food and Drug Administration's food labeling program which was introduced in 1990 as part of the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act. Whether choosing foods in the supermarket or making a lunch selection in your workplace cafeteria – the goal of the program is to provide nutrition education while helping to promote wise food choices that can lead to a balanced diet and overall wellness.

A starting point or reference point to help consumers gain a perspective on how a food fits into their overall diet is the **Daily Value**. Daily Values are not intended to dictate specific amounts of nutrients needed in the diet, but rather to offer general guidance. They are based on a 2,000-calorie diet, chosen because it approximates the calorie needs for weight management for a large part of the population.

Throughout the cafeteria, signs will be displayed at food stations to help you identify the best sources of vitamin C, fiber, calcium and protein. Here is a review of the categories, the Daily Values, what they mean and why each is important:

Vitamin C Plus [Daily Value = 60 milligrams]

- Foods in this category are a good source of vitamin C. They provide 6 milligrams to 11 milligrams of vitamin C per serving or 10% to 19% of the Daily Value. Food sources include cantaloupe, oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, broccoli, kiwis, strawberries and peppers.
- *What is Vitamin C?* Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin that acts as an antioxidant. Antioxidants work by neutralizing the destructive compounds in the body known as free radicals.
- *Why is Vitamin C Important?* Since the body does not manufacture or store vitamin C, it must be obtained from the diet daily. Vitamin C helps promote a healthy immune system, plays a role in skin and cartilage formation and aids in the absorption of iron.

Fiber Plus [Daily Value = 25 grams]

- Foods in this category are a good source of fiber. They provide 2.5 grams to 4.9 grams of fiber per serving, or 10% to 19% of the Daily Value per serving. Food sources include whole grain cereals, whole grain breads, many fruits and vegetables, beans, peas and lentils.
- *What is Fiber?* Fiber is a substance found in plants and cannot be digested by the human body. Fiber can be divided into two types: soluble and insoluble. Since soluble and insoluble fiber have different health effects in the body, it's important to include both types in your diet.
- *Why is Fiber Important?* *Insoluble* fiber, the fiber found in bran cereals, whole wheat bread, brown rice, corn and berries, helps make stools softer and bulkier. Softer stools put less stress on the intestinal wall and pass through the intestinal tract quickly. This is believed to decrease the risk of colon and rectal cancers. *Soluble* fiber, the predominant fiber found in oats, oat bran, barley, apples and lentils helps lower blood cholesterol by binding with cholesterol and bile acids and removing them from the body.

Calcium Plus [Daily Value = 1000 milligrams]

- Foods in this category are a good source of calcium and contain a minimum of 100 milligrams and up to 190 milligrams of calcium per serving, or 10% to 19% of the Daily Value.
- *What is calcium?* Calcium is a mineral needed in relatively large amounts in the body. Low fat Milk, yogurt and cheese are the best sources but it can also be found in some green leafy vegetables like kale or spinach. Fish with edible bones like sardines, fortified soy milk, fortified orange juice and tofu made with calcium sulfate also supply appreciable amounts.
- *Why is calcium important?* Calcium is essential in building bone as well as slowing the rate of bone loss that occurs in middle age. It plays a role in normal nerve function, blood clotting and muscle contraction. New research has shown that calcium may help the body burn fat, a plus for weight management.

High Protein [Daily Value = 50 grams]

- Foods in this category contain at least 10 grams of protein per serving, or 20% or more of the Daily Value.
- *What is Protein?* Protein is an essential nutrient. It is composed of many small units called amino acids – often referred to as the ‘building blocks’ of protein. Most proteins are large molecules that contain hundreds of amino acids arranged in various branches and chains. Protein is found in both animal and plant sources. Plant proteins like beans, tofu and veggie burgers, and lean animal proteins like chicken and fish are excellent choices as they are low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol.
- *Why is protein important?* Protein is required for life and growth. In the body, it is needed for new cell production (hair, skin and nails). Protein helps heal tissue, replenish blood, carry oxygen through the blood in the form of hemoglobin. The amount of protein needed daily depends on your age and sex. The Daily Value for protein -- the reference amount on which food label nutrition facts are based -- is 50 grams. Some women may need less while most men need more.

Lean

- *What is “Lean”?* In order to be labeled “lean”, a food must meet specific criteria: “Lean” is a term used only to describe meat, poultry and fish. **Lean:** Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol.
- *Why is “lean” important?* Choosing “lean” cuts of meat and poultry (pork loin, beef round, chicken or turkey with skin removed) that have been roasted, baked or grilled can help keep blood cholesterol levels down, thereby reducing risk of heart disease.
- *The “Lean” Caveat:* While only certain proteins will meet the FDA’s criteria for “lean” (specified above), most nutritionists as well as several leading health and nutrition organizations such as the American Heart Association and American Dietetic Association agree that some cholesterol-containing protein foods not qualifying for the “lean” label yet low in fat -- shrimp and eggs, for example -- can still be part of a healthful diet if eaten in moderation and balanced with low cholesterol foods the remainder of the day or over several days.

