

## A Balanced Diet: It Is As Easy As 1, 2, 3...4

Good nutrition has become more confusing than ever before. With so many different diet plans and philosophies, it is hard to decipher what a good diet really is. Don't be confused though, the answer is simpler than you think. A balanced diet means exactly what the name implies. Most doctors and dieticians believe that we are meant to eat a mixed diet in order to obtain optimal nutrition. In order to maintain optimal weight and health, we need to have some consistent dietary guidelines which we must stick to permanently. That being said, forget all the things you've heard, and start using the "Rules of Fours."

1. Eat four times a day
2. Eat at four-hour intervals
3. Split your plate into four equal servings

Although most people only eat two or three moderate to large meals a day, it is actually better to eat smaller and more frequent meals. Since your metabolism is programmed to only take what it needs and store or excrete the rest, your body can not always put all the nutrients to use that are ingested in large meals. This results in many nutrients passing through the body and being excreted without ever being absorbed and excess calories being stored as fat. Fat is not our best fuel source for most activities and it is also very difficult to convert to energy or burn off. By eating smaller meals, you give your metabolism a great advantage, allowing it to absorb and use more of the nutrients and energy provided by the food you eat and allow for less waste, meaning less stored fat and higher energy levels. This will allow your metabolism to run more efficiently.

Once the metabolism is running more efficiently, you will get hungrier sooner. By eating four meals at four-hour intervals, you can keep your metabolism going so that it is constantly absorbing, distributing, and converting nutrients to energy. Although this rule is easy to understand, it is often the most difficult to execute. If you prepare and plan your daily meals the night before, you are much more likely to stay on task. If meals are skipped, the body's reaction is to slow down the metabolic processes in order to conserve energy, which immediately eliminates the "kick-start" you're trying to place on your metabolism.

So now that you know how often to eat, you need to know what exactly to eat and how much of it. A meal should be able to be divided into four parts.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of it should be protein food including lean meats, poultry, fish, legumes, tofu, yogurt, or eggs. Another  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your meal should be unrefined carbohydrates including brown rice, assorted whole grains, whole grain cereals, breads and pastas. Potatoes are a good source of energy that also fit into this category. The other  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the plate should be made up with fruits and vegetables. It's also a good idea to stay away from fried foods and those foods that are high in saturated fat. Although it's okay to have a treat now and then, just remember that it needs to be in moderation. Make sure to use moderation when determining the size of your meals also. Never eat until you are full, but rather until the sensation of hunger subsides. Since your next meal is only four hours away, decrease the size of your portions. If you find that you are hungry before four hours elapses, then increase the size of your portions. By following these three rules we can consistently consume the right foods in the right quantities, which allow us to maintain a healthy balanced diet for a lifetime.

### About the Author

More information on [diet](#) and supplements can be found at <http://vitanetonline.com/>

Source: <http://www.articletrader.com>