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- › Adult Health
- › Childrens Health
- › Diabetes
- › Diet and Nutrition
- › Digestive
- › Fitness
- › Heart Disease
- › Mens Health
- › Pregnancy
- › Recipes
- › Senior Health
- › Supplements
- › Womens health

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- › All Guides
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DIET COLUMN

# Tips to Improve Your Nutrition from HealthiNation's Sharon Richter, RD

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Recently we reported on a study by HealthiNation that revealed that Americans have an overly optimistic view of their [nutritional well being](#). While majority of adults (52%) think that they are doing all they can do to achieve a balanced nutritional diet, 76% of adults are not getting the minimum daily serving of fruits and vegetables as recommended by the USDA.



To help close the gap between that optimism and the sober reality, we caught up with Sharon Richter, RD, a registered dietitian who is passionate about helping people understand the impact diet and nutrition have on their overall health. Based in New York City, Richter hosts HealthiNation's nutrition programs and has a private practice where she counsels clients about sports nutrition, weight loss/gain, [eating disorders](#), and disease prevention for children, adolescents and adults.

"I recommend that people try to achieve balance," said Richter. "If you eat healthy 80% of the time and ensure that you're meeting all of your dietary needs, you can indulge a little bit during the other 20% of the time."

While the USDA recommends choosing a variety of lean protein, increasing intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and eating a variety of vegetables, Richter emphasizes fruit and vegetable intake as an important focus.

"You can never go wrong with fruits and vegetables," said Richter. "For people who eat out frequently, restaurants are offering more and more options for people who want to eat more salads and fruit and less fried, fattening foods."

Since Americans are often on the go, it's extremely important to pay attention to the calories, fat and fiber in the foods that you're ordering and eating.

"Always look for snacks that have a [high fiber](#) content," said Richter. "They'll keep you feeling full and sated longer than snacks without it."

While HealthiNation's survey revealed that 46% of people pay attention to taste above all else when making food choices at restaurants, it is important for people to consider other factors, like calorie content and nutrition.

"Think of food as fuel," said Richter. "You'd never start your car without fuel so don't start your day without fuel. Eating a [healthy breakfast](#) is key to a balanced diet."

**May 12th, 2011**

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by [Maris](#) — *Healthy Culinary Expert*

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Maris is a respected self-taught cook who's passionate about helping new cooks learn to prepare healthy, delicious meals and snacks. Quality chocolate, farmers markets, and homemade food are winners in her book.

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