

Eating to be Well with Sickle Cell Disease

With Sickle Cell Disease it is especially important to eat a **balanced diet** to make sure that we give our body the energy, fiber and vitamins and minerals that it needs to keep us healthy.

What is a balanced diet?

A balanced diet is a diet that includes foods from all of the five major food groups and oils. Each of the different food groups provides our bodies with important nutrients. Avoiding any one food group places individuals at risk for less than optimal nutrition. The following includes examples of the different food groups:

Food Groups:	Examples of foods and what they give our bodies:
Grains 	Whole grain breads, rice, pastas, cereals and crackers – <i>aim to make at least half of the grains that you eat “whole” grains</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fiber – helps to reduce blood cholesterol and keeps our bowels moving</i> • <i>Folate – (in fortified grains)- helps our body make new red blood cells</i> • <i>B-vitamins – helps our body to use the energy from foods that we eat</i> • <i>Magnesium – important for healthy bones</i> • <i>Selenium – important for healthy immune system</i>
Vegetables 	Spinach, carrots, broccoli, tomato, green beans, salad – <i>aim for orange and dark green leafy vegetables*</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fiber – Tip: keep the skin on veggies and fruits for extra fiber</i> • <i>Folate – Tip: choose leafy greens</i> • <i>Vitamin A – helps to keep eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections</i> • <i>Vitamin C – helps heal wounds and keeps teeth and gums healthy</i> • <i>Potassium – may help maintain healthy blood pressure</i>
Fruits 	Oranges, bananas, apples, grapes, melon, berries, kiwi, peach, plums * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide similar vitamins, minerals and fiber as vegetables, see above.</i> • <i>*Note: individual fruits and vegetables provide different amounts of vitamins, minerals and fiber so it is important to eat a variety of different fruits and vegetables daily to maximize your benefits.</i>
Milk 	Low fat milk, yogurt and cheese <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Calcium and Vitamin D – for strong, healthy bones</i> • <i>Potassium – especially in milk and yogurt</i>
Meats & Beans 	Lean chicken, pork, fish and beef, nuts, seeds, peas and beans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Protein and zinc – for energy and growth</i> • <i>Iron – helps to carry oxygen in our blood</i> • <i>Omega 3 fatty acids –in certain fish, nuts and seeds–help to reduce inflammation and decrease risk of chronic diseases, like heart disease</i>
Oils	Liquid vegetable oils like olive, canola, corn oil; nuts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vitamin E – works as an antioxidant to help to prevent disease</i> • <i>Omega 3 fatty acids –in flax, canola, soybean and walnut oils, and walnuts, flaxseeds and pumpkin seeds</i>

Tips for eating a balanced diet:

- Drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids each day; ask your doctor or registered dietitian how much fluid you should be drinking.
- Keep foods with you when you are away from your home, this will help to ensure that you have a healthy snack with you at all times.
- Try to have foods from at least 3-4 of the food groups each time that you eat; this helps you to eat a balance variety of foods throughout the day.
- Consult your registered dietitian for specific recommendations for weight loss or weight gain as appropriate.

See sample meal plan below for examples of how to choose balanced meals:

Breakfast: whole wheat toast with peanut butter, banana and glass of milk

Lunch: tuna fish sandwich on whole wheat bread with apple and milk

Snack: low fat yogurt mixed w/ 1-2 tablespoons nuts and fruit, water

Dinner: grilled chicken breast, mashed potato, salad with olive oil and vinegar and milk

Snack: cheese and whole grain crackers, ½ cup 100% fruit juice

(Note: your registered dietitian can help make meal plans that are specific to your individual energy and nutrient needs)