

Healthy Eating



There are many myths about healthy eating—it costs too much, it takes too much time, and good-for-you foods just don't taste good. The truth is, healthy eating really is possible with limited time and budget. And, if you do it right, healthy eating can be tasty and enjoyable. Read on to learn more about how you can bring good nutrition to your home.

What's the big deal?

You've probably heard the phrase "You are what you eat." Well, it's not far from the truth. Your body and its ability to function properly depend on the nutrients that you get from your food. In many ways, your body is like a car. Food is your fuel. And you need the right kind of fuel—and enough of it—to avoid breaking down.

Right now, many Americans are starving themselves of their health:

- Studies show that junk food, sugary drinks, and beer make up nearly one-third of the calories adult Americans consume daily!¹
- By comparison, healthier foods, such as fruits and vegetables, make up only 10% of our caloric intake.²
- Because of poor eating habits, two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and many more are simply malnourished.

Is healthy eating really possible?

Yes! There are plenty of healthy recipes that you can make in less time than it takes to watch the evening news (20 minutes). And the cost of a home-made meal is almost always much less expensive than the cost of a meal bought at a restaurant.

Make healthy eating for you and your family easy by planning out your meals in advance and learning where you can find bargains in your community.

Can healthy eating really be tasty?

Yes! One of the best things about healthy eating is the great taste and variety it offers. Don't deprive yourself of the treats you love—just balance them with healthier foods. And try to make healthier versions of your favorite meals. Ask family and friends to recommend healthy recipes—or invent your own and share them!

Can healthy eating really be fun?

Yes! Make meals something your whole family looks forward to. Here are some ideas:

- Get everyone involved in helping to prepare the meal.
- Share healthy eating with friends.
- Start collecting your favorite healthy meals from friends, magazines, and online.

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Are there any simple things that I can do to eat healthier today?

Yes! Here are some ideas:

- 1. Avoid high-calorie drinks.** A large portion of many people's calories come from soda and sugary drinks. By replacing these beverages with water or drinks with fewer calories, you can cut out a lot of excess calories.
- 2. Stop with the salt.** Too much salt is bad for your health because it can raise your blood pressure. Try not to add any extra salt to your meal—and next time you are at the store, look for the low-salt versions of your favorite foods.
- 3. Say no to “supersizing” and “seconds.”** Obesity has to do not only with the type of food you eat, but also the amount that you eat. Portion size is important, so don't heap on another helping or feel like you have to clean your plate. Become familiar with portion sizes. For instance, one serving of meat is roughly the size of your palm or a deck of playing cards. If you order food at a restaurant, don't be afraid to bring home leftovers or share entrées.
- 4. Look at the ingredients before you buy.** Before you pull a product off the shelf, look at its ingredients and nutritional content. Try to buy foods that are low in salt and fat and high in protein, fiber, and vitamins.
- 5. Try to find substitutes.** Instead of eating high-fat, high-calorie versions of your favorite foods, see if you can substitute healthier versions. Try ground turkey instead of ground beef or lean ground beef instead of full-fat ground beef. Instead of drinking whole milk, switch to skim or 1%.
- 6. Think before you order.** Not all menus are created equal. Next time you visit a restaurant, ask the waiter if there are any lower-fat, lower-calorie options on the menu. And don't be afraid to ask for extra veggies!
- 7. An apple a day...** Well, it doesn't always have to be an apple, but be sure to make fruits and vegetables a part of your everyday diet.
- 8. Avoid fad diets.** Fad diets are not a sustainable way to lose weight, according to health experts. Stick with diets that have been approved by reliable health and medical organizations, and talk to your doctor about what the best diet plan is for you.
- 9. Stick to the outside aisles at the grocery store.** Have you ever noticed that the freshest foods—produce, eggs, milk, meats, and fresh breads—are located around the outside of the store? Avoid the middle of the store where highly processed foods tend to hang out.
- 10. Start the day right.** A recent study found that people who ate breakfast every day were one-third less likely to be obese compared to those who skipped the meal. In addition, they were half as likely to have blood-sugar problems, which increase the risk of developing diabetes or having high cholesterol, a known risk factor for heart disease.³

1 Block, G. Foods Contributing to Energy Intake in the U.S.: Data from NHANES III and NHANES 1999-2000. *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis*. June-August 2004, 17 (3-4): 439-447.
2 Ibid.

3 Breakfast is “Most Important Meal.” BBC News. March 7, 2004.