



Highlights for Healthy Eating

We can talk all day about fad diets, the latest research and weight-loss pills, but they're all a distraction from the real issue. It's real simple: We're eating too much of the wrong foods. Instead, we need to eat the right amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables (raw whenever possible), whole grains and nuts, and much less meat. We also need to minimize processed foods, sugar, white flour, sodium and unhealthy fats.

- The typical American diet is meat-based, meaning meat is the main ingredient at most meals, and everything else is a side dish. A plant-based diet, one in which fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains are the main ingredients and meat is just a side dish, is more healthy. You don't need to eliminate meat, although many people may want to. You just need to eat much smaller, leaner portions of meat for a more balanced diet.
- Portion control is all-important. At home, don't go back for seconds. Of course, this only works if your "firsts" aren't the size of hubcaps! If the restaurants you like to go to serve huge portions, share with a friend, or start off the meal by putting half your food in a doggie bag.
- Begin meals with fruits and vegetables, such as a salad or a serving of seasonal fruit. They provide good nutrients with low calories. By starting with fruits or vegetables, you'll leave less room for the stuff you should minimize (like meat, heavy starches and dessert).
- Many people have a handful of favorite recipes that they use most of the time. Try experimenting with ways to reduce the fat content and increase the nutrition in these old standbys, but keep the familiar good taste.
- Increase your intake of raw vegetables to get the maximum health benefits from your food. Snack on crunchy veggies, such as carrots, celery, broccoli heads, snap peas, peppers or jicama, with hummus or fresh salsa. Try a "super salad" with a variety of tastes and nutrition, so you don't feel deprived. A salad with just iceberg lettuce is the fast food of salads – mostly worthless. Instead, use different lettuces and many other ingredients, and change them each day for variety. Throw in a few small chunks of lean meat, if you like, and use low-fat dressings. A typical super salad should have as many as 10 different healthy ingredients.

- Think you don't have time to eat healthily? Healthy eating can be the ultimate fast food! How long does it take to get an apple out of the fridge? To put hummus on a tortilla with some sprouts or lettuce? To eat some whole grain cereal with fruit and low-fat milk, yogurt or soy milk? To stir-fry some vegetables? Compare the cost and time it takes to prepare these simple dishes to driving to a fast-food restaurant to pick up that greasy burger and fries.
- When grocery shopping, buy only healthy ingredients to keep at home. Leave the junk food at the market -- that way it doesn't end up in your mouth. Don't go shopping when you're hungry or depressed, since you're more likely to buy the wrong stuff.
- Find a healthy therapy for emotional ups and downs. Eating when you're depressed is natural; when you feel threatened, food represents basic survival, since it keeps you alive. Instead, go for a walk, watch a favorite movie, go to the gym, or call a friend or relative you haven't talked with in awhile. Recognize that you're upset, and use that as a flag to do something good for yourself.
- Try a one-day fast, where all you consume is fresh fruit or vegetable juice and/or tea. This gives your digestive system a rest and helps get your body back in line if you've been overeating. If you set your intent to fast for a day, you can get past the knee-jerk reaction to eat the moment you get those first hunger pangs and you'll gain a feeling of control. For most people, fasting for just one day won't cause any problems. Humans have fasted, intentionally or unintentionally, since the dawn of time. However, to be safe, you might want to consult with a health professional first.
- Try a TV diet: Reduce the number of hours you spend in front of the tube. This gives you time to prepare healthy food and talk with your family, and you won't be influenced by the ads that tell you to eat junk food. Ever notice that the most heavily advertised products are for things that are unhealthy or things you don't need?
- Finally, get your spouse, friends and family to agree and collaborate with you on your new healthy eating plan. You're a lot more likely to succeed with the support of people who care about you.

Eating healthfully doesn't need to be hard!

