

Tips for Healthy Eating



With all the choices you have for eating, do you ever wonder how you will ever be able to eat healthy? Did you know where you eat can also have an effect on the choices you make? Food choices can differ and present additional concerns at home, work, or when you travel. With the right information and determination, good choices can be made for a healthy eating lifestyle. Some of the benefits of a healthy eating lifestyle can include:

- Reduced risk of heart disease and some forms of cancer.
- Elevated mood, energy and self-esteem.
- Reduced anxiety and stress.
- Lowered weight or maintained healthy weight

Making smart food choices takes practice. Temptations are around every corner. With the right planning these temptations may be avoided. Planning can start at the grocery store. Selecting healthy food choices help in putting you in the driver's seat for a change in eating habits.

Situations may come up when we need to make choices on the run. Some examples may be a lunch appointment at work, going out to dinner with friends, or when traveling. Healthy food choices can be made no matter where you are. Here are some helpful tips that may help you make healthy choices about the food you eat.

Tips for Healthy Eating at Home

The best place to start is at home. You have the ability to research and plan healthy food choices. You also have the ability to control what types of food you have at home. Here are some helpful tips from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines (2005):

Eat a variety of foods

Your body needs a variety of nutrients for your best health. You can choose from the various food groups for your necessary nutrients. Choosing from a variety of foods may also give you some interesting and different meals.

Choose your foods wisely

The types of food and how much you eat go together in controlling your weight. Some ways to eat smarter can include: choosing smaller portions, eating more raw fruits and vegetables, and limiting foods with high caloric content.

Make physical activity part of your day

If you are physically active for 30 minutes a day you may reduce your risk of certain diseases, which can include high blood pressure, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. It may also increase your energy level.

Choose carbohydrates wisely

Carbohydrates are our body's main source of energy. They are commonly found in vegetables, grains, fruit, and milk. Look for breads and cereals made with whole grains. Avoid foods that are high in sugar such as candy or soft drinks.

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Choose and prepare foods with little salt

Most Americans consume more salt than they need. On average, the higher your salt intake, the higher your blood pressure will be. Reducing your salt intake is one possible way to reduce your blood pressure. Suggestions for lower salt foods may include: milk products (except for buttermilk), fresh or frozen vegetables, dry or cooked cereals, salt-free potato chips, and tortillas.

Keep your food safe to eat

You can take simple measures to reduce your chances of getting sick from the food you eat.

- Wash your hands, food contact surfaces, and vegetables and fruits
- Cook your foods to recommended temperatures
- Refrigerate perishable foods properly
- Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing foods

Tips for Eating at the Office

As if making healthy eating choices isn't difficult enough, it is even more of a challenge while you are away from home – for example, when you are at work. Depending on the type of environment you work in, your workplace may contribute to unhealthy eating habits. If you do not bring a healthy lunch with you, your only choices may be to raid the vending machine, nibble away at junk food while at your desk, or to grab lunch at the nearest fast food restaurant. However, just because you are away from home, it does not mean that you have to give up eating healthy. Here are some tips for eating while on the job:

- Bring healthy foods with you to work such as yogurt, sandwiches, soup, and fruit.
- Keep healthy snacks such as nuts or protein bars at your desk.
- Avoid the vending machines. The vending machines seem like a good alternative if we have not brought our healthy lunches or snacks with us. Remember that candy and chips can't replace a healthy sandwich or fresh vegetables or fruit.
- Make the right choice. When going out to lunch, make healthy selections. Some restaurants or fast food places do have healthier choices versus the cheeseburger and fries. Remember, salads can be deceiving if you use dressing. Avoid dressing, order it "on the side" or use low-fat alternatives.
- Avoid the candy dish. The office can be a dumping ground for extra treats and candy. Avoiding these temptations may keep your healthy lifestyle on course.

Tips for Eating when Traveling

The fast pace of life on the road can bring new challenges. It can be easy to make a rushed choice when you have few options and even less time to decide. Planning to bring quick

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healthy snacks and food items can help. Here are some tips for making healthy food choices while you are traveling:

- Start with healthy breakfast. This can include fruits, milk, yogurt, or whole grain toast, bagels, or English muffins.
- Eat foods that are easy to digest when traveling. Examples can include fruits, soups, or crackers. Food with fiber can be helpful.
- Eat your main meal at lunch and then have a light dinner.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, bring a water bottle with you. The USDA recommends drinking six to eight glasses of water a day.
- If possible, explore your food choices and try to come up with healthy options.
- Bring food for when you are in a hurry. Foods such as protein shakes, protein bars or dried fruits and nuts can give you the healthy choices while on the run.

Making healthy eating choices is possible if you are willing to take a few extra steps. Planning what and where you are going to eat can be your first step. Making smart choices and raising your awareness can make the difference. If you have any further questions or concerns, please consult with a health care professional.

References

United States Department of Agriculture (2005). The 2005 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Retrieved from the World Wide Web February 2, 2006.

Web site address: <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

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