

Healthy Habits

1. Get plenty of sleep.

Lack of sleep has been shown to have a direct link to hunger, overeating, & weight gain. Exhaustion also impairs your judgment, which can lead to poor food choices. Aim for around 8 hours of quality sleep a night.

2. Out of sight, out of mind. Limit the amount of tempting foods you have at home. If you share a kitchen with non-dieters, store snack foods & other high-calorie indulgences in cabinets or drawers out of your sight.

3. Opt for healthier cooking methods. Veggies that have been breaded or fried or doused in heavy sauces are no longer low-calorie, so tread with caution. Opt for healthier cooking methods, such as steaming, & use low-fat dressings & spices for flavor.

4. When you eat dessert, truly savor each bite. How many times have you mindlessly eaten your way through a bag of cookies or a huge piece of cake? Can you really say that you enjoyed each bite? Make your indulgence count by eating slowly & paying attention to the flavors & textures. You'll enjoy it more, plus you're less likely to overeat.

5. Healthy habits start at home. The best way to fight or prevent childhood obesity & weight problems is to get the whole family on a healthier track. Making better food choices & becoming more active will benefit everyone, regardless of weight. & with the whole family involved, it will be much easier for your overweight child to make lasting changes.

6. Be the good example for your children. The most effective way to influence your child is by your own healthy example. If your children see you eating your vegetables, being active, & limiting your TV time, there's a good chance that they will do the same. These habits will also have the happy side effect of helping you maintain a healthy weight.

7. Start with a plan for lifelong health. Focus on the big picture achieving overall good health not just short-term weight loss.

8. Focus on your food. Pick one place to sit down & eat at home. Eating while doing other things may lead to eating more than you think. Also, switching from a large plate to a smaller one may help you feel satisfied with reduced portions.

9. Balance your food choices over time. Not every food has to be «perfect.» When eating a food high in fat, salt or sugar, select other foods that are low in these ingredients. If you miss out on any food group one day, make up for it the next. Your food choices over several days should fit together into a healthy pattern.

10. Eat regular meals. Skipping meals can lead to out-of-control hunger, often resulting in overeating. When you're very hungry, it's also tempting to forget about good nutrition. Snacking between meals can help curb hunger, but don't eat so much that your snack becomes an entire meal.

11. Maintain a healthy weight. The weight that's right for you depends on many factors including your sex, height, age & heredity. Excess body fat increases your chances for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some types of cancer & other illnesses. But being too thin can increase your risk for osteoporosis, menstrual irregularities & other health problems. If you're constantly losing & regaining weight, a registered dietitian can help you develop sensible eating habits for successful weight management. Regular exercise is also important to maintaining a healthy weight.

12. Eat every 3 - 4 hours. This is important to maximize the efficiency of your metabolism & burn calories at a higher rate throughout the day. It also prevents you from over-eating because you are too hungry. You should have three meals & two to three snacks a day.

13. Keep track of your food intake by writing down what you eat & drink every day. Use this record to help you see if you need to eat more from any food groups, such as fruits, vegetables or dairy products.

14. Listen to your body. Ask yourself if you are really hungry. You may really be thirsty, so try drinking a glass of water first. During a meal, stop eating before you feel full. It actually takes a few minutes for your brain to tell your body that it has had enough food, so eat slowly. Eating just enough to satisfy your hunger will help you remain alert, relaxed & feeling your best, rather than stuffing yourself into a “food coma”!

15. Take time to chew your food. Chew your food slowly, savoring every bite. We tend to rush through our meals, forgetting to actually taste the flavors & feel the textures of what is in our mouths. Reconnect with the joy of eating.

16. One step at a time. Establishing new food habits is much easier if you focus on & take action on one food group or food fact at a time.

17. Shop smart. Get the facts on food labels. The nutrition facts panel found on most food labels will help you: Find out which foods are good sources of fiber, calcium, iron, & vitamin C. Compare similar foods to find out which one is lower in fat & calories. Search for low-sodium foods & Look for foods that are low in saturated fat & trans fats.

18. Make at least half of your grains whole. Choose %100 whole-grain breads, cereals, crackers, pasta & brown rice. Check the ingredients list on food packages to find whole-grain foods.

19. Twice a week, make seafood the protein on your plate. Keep meat & poultry portions small & lean.

20. Think of snacks as mini-meals that contribute nutrient-rich foods. You can fit snack calories into your personal healthy eating plan without over-spending your day's calorie budget.

21. When possible, set aside the white flour & bread & reach for products that are made from oats, barley, buckwheat, bulgur, rye, brown rice, millet, & wheat.

