

A Realistic Guide to HEALTHY LIVING



Moderation is the key to maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle

WITH ENDLESS OPTIONS for each grocery store product, a fast food restaurant on every corner, and an overabundance of inactivity, making healthy decisions today isn't exactly synonymous with effortless. The good news is living a healthy lifestyle is probably a lot easier than you might think. Don't worry, it doesn't require giving up your favorite foods forever, cutting carbs, or even running marathons.

Although the news update of the hour may have you feeling confused about what you should be doing to stay healthy, there seems to be some vital health information that remains constant. Whether your goal is losing weight, lowering blood pressure, or living longer, these strategies are key to every healthy existence. Your fad diet

may have only lasted for a month, but these are healthful changes you can (and should) keep for life.

Study Up!

Many people think they are already making healthy choices, but unless you are carefully examining the nutrition labels, you might find out that you have been deceived. Even items that seem to be packaged as diet foods are often very misleading.

Take the time to read the nutrition fact label for every food you consume (and look up those that don't have labels). You'll be surprised at the extra calories or unwanted ingredients creeping into your diet via foods you had previously considered healthy.

Aim for foods that contain high amounts of fiber, calcium, iron, and

vitamin C, and low amounts of sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat. Use the percent of daily values column to determine how well a particular food fits into your daily meal plan. (Don't forget that these numbers are based on a 2,000 calorie diet for the entire day.) Also, read through the ingredient list. It starts with the primary ingredient and continues in descending order.

Use the Tools Available

With health consciousness at the forefront of the news today, there is a never-ending supply of free resources available for your use. Take some time to read up on current health info—the more you know, the easier it will be to stay on the right track.

Log on to www.mypyramid.gov and enter your age, sex, weight, height, and

activity level to get a food pyramid customized to fit your needs. It will break down exactly how much you should consume from each food group and the number of calories you should have daily. Go to American Cancer Society's website (www.cancer.org) and check out the body mass index calculator, the target heart rate calculator, and the activity calorie counter. Visit www.thedailyplate.com to determine the nutrition of the foods you're eating or www.cookinglight.com for healthy recipe ideas.

Write It Down

Almost all healthy diet and weight loss plans incorporate the technique of food journaling, where you keep a daily log of everything you eat. Keeping a food journal will help you calculate how many calories you are eating to maintain your current weight, and determine how many you should cut if you want to lose weight. In addition, your food journal may deter you from over-indulging because you know that you'll have to write it down and admit it to yourself later.

Even implementing this strategy on occasion will give you a much better awareness of how many calories you tend to consume. (*Tip: Log your exercise activity in this journal as well.*)

If you do need to lose weight, determine a manageable goal like losing ten percent of your body weight. Assess your success either by weighing yourself daily or after a period of several weeks. (*Tip: Weighing yourself at the same time daily can allow you to directly see the impact of your food and exercise decisions.*)

Mind Your Portions

Most of us are eating much more than our body actually needs to stay satisfied. Research has shown that portion sizes

today are exponentially larger than they have been in the past. A University of North Carolina study found that portion sizes (and therefore calorie counts) for key food groups grew significantly in fast-food restaurants, conventional restaurants, and in homes between 1977 and 1996. Try sticking to the serving sizes listed on the nutritional information, using a smaller dish (so portions seem larger), or starting with a slightly smaller amount to see if that will be enough to satisfy you.

If you aren't a calorie counter, another good way to limit your portion sizes is to use a hunger scale. The hunger scale is a tool to help you avoid eating mindlessly. The scale goes from 1, weak and light headed, to 10, stuffed.

The key to using the hunger scale is to avoid extremes. Waiting too long to eat could cause you to binge. The goal is to start eating when you are moderately hungry (3 or 4), and eat only until you are comfortable (5 or 6). You should eat only enough at a time to fuel your body for the next 2 to 4 hours.

Watch Calories When Eating Out

Eating out and eating healthy don't always go hand-in-hand, but there are a few clever strategies to help you keep the calories under control at restaurants.

Begin by simply eating smaller portions than what you are given. You can try limiting your portions by sharing an entrée with a friend or taking half of it home to eat later; some restaurants also offer half size portions for a smaller price.

Another strategy is to order an appetizer with a side salad instead of an entrée. Always order sauces and salad dressings on the side so you can control how many extra calories you consume. And don't forget to order grilled, baked,

steamed, or poached foods instead of fried, sautéed, smothered or au gratin.

Beware of Whites

If you are trying to lose or maintain weight, white foods can be your worst enemy. White is the color of the most high calorie (and empty nutritional value) carbs such as bagels, breads, sugar, rice, pastas, etc. Choose whole grain breads and pastas over whites. Not only will you be getting a much more nutritious option, but they also contain a lot of fiber that will keep you feeling full much longer.

You can still have your carbs, just make sure they're whole grain! (*Tip: When selecting breads, make sure that whole grain or whole wheat is listed as the first ingredient or you could be getting an imposter. Each slice of bread should contain at least 2 grams of fiber.*)

Don't Forget Your Fiber

Fiber is one of your biggest health allies. It can help lower caloric intake without making you feel deprived. This is because fiber fills up a lot of space in your stomach and keeps you feeling fuller longer by slowing the rate of food traveling through the digestive system.

Most experts recommend that you try to get 4 grams of fiber in every meal or snack for a total of about 25 grams of fiber per day. Some excellent fiber-full snacks are grapes, apples, oatmeal, and wheat bread. (*Tip: Foods with high protein content also help keep you feeling satisfied.*)

Water Yourself

Drinking water is essential for any healthy lifestyle. Its benefits are irreplaceable.

Water actually uses calories to consume (50 calories per 50 oz.), but takes

HEALTHY TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER YOU!

Get some sleep. Insufficient sleep increases production of cortisol, the hormone that regulates appetite. High cortisol levels can worsen hunger and keep the body from burning carbs.

Eat before dinner. Disregard your mother's advice and eat a few nuts or an apple 30 minutes before a meal. It won't spoil your appetite, but it can dramatically decrease it!

Do it the light way. Switch to lo-cal or non-fat yogurt, cream cheese, sour cream, mayo, salad dressing, butter, and cheese (and whatever else you can!) You'll dramatically cut calories and probably won't even notice a taste difference!

Wait 20 minutes before a second helping. It takes this long for your brain to receive the signal that you are full.

Pair the good with the bad. If you're going to indulge, pair a healthy choice with your guilty pleasure (skim milk with cookies). This way, you still receive some nutritional value in your splurge.

Beef it up (with veggies). Increase the healthful ingredients in recipes (like fruits and veggies), which will increase your yield but not your calories. Examine recipes to see where you can take away, add, or substitute healthier ingredients.

Brush your teeth. Brushing your teeth serves as a physical and psychological cue to stop eating. (When you're on the go, pop a breath mint!)

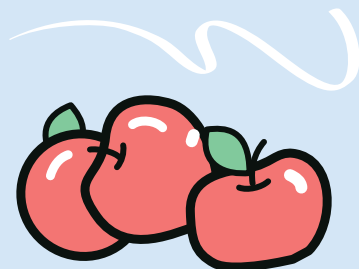
Eat dairy daily. The hormone calcitriol, found in dairy products, helps conserve calcium, convert less sugar to fat, and burn more body fat. Opt for the lower calorie versions. Many times you won't notice the difference in a recipe!

Use the good oils. If cooking spray won't cut it, opt for olive, canola, grape, or flaxseed oils instead of other less-healthful varieties.

Have a mini-splurge. If you crave a candy bar, go for the fun-size. If you must have some chips, opt for the baked variety (and stick to a single serving).

Put down the feedbag. Never eat anything out of a package. Measure out your individual serving and put the package away!

Be picky about meat. Choose leaner meats like center-cuts, loins, and skinless white-meat poultry.



in none. Scientists believe this is due to your body's need to warm the temperature of the water to 98.6 degrees. In addition, your body can often mistake thirst for hunger, so before you reach for a snack try having a glass of water to see if that will satisfy you.

Drinking water can actually speed the body's metabolism too! So aim for at least 8 (8 oz.) glasses per day.

Snack Healthy

In the past, snacking has been associated with the taboo images of potato chips and chocolate bars filling vending machines; however, in today's world experts acknowledge that healthy snacking can be key to a balanced diet.

If you eat every 3 to 4 hours, your blood sugar will never drop so low that you become ravenous and binge. If your next meal is in an hour or two, opt for 50-100 calorie snacks. If it's going to be longer, a 150-200 calorie snack should be enough to get you through.

Try to incorporate fiber, protein and healthy fat into all your snacks. Snack on fruits, veggies, lo-cal dairy products, lo-cal granola bars, or a quarter cup of nuts (unroasted and unsalted). Keep in mind that hunger is oftentimes confused with the desire to taste something. In this case, a piece of licorice, a mint or a piece of gum might satisfy your craving.

Get Active

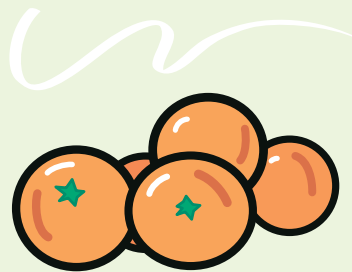
You're probably thinking, okay I might be able to handle eating right. But exercise? There's no way I can work that into my schedule (not to mention I can't stand it!). But it's not as difficult as you might think.

According to the American Cancer Society, adults should engage in 30 minutes of moderate activity five or more days a week. That may sound intimidat-

A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE TO PORTION SIZES

For those who don't carry their measuring cups around with them, knowing what a portion size is can be a little tricky. Here's a foolproof way to get the serving size right every time!

Food	Standard serving	About the size of ...
Meat, poultry, fish	2–3 ounces	Deck of cards, bar of soap
Pasta, rice	1/2 cup	Clenched fist, tennis ball
Cheese	1 ounce	4 dice
Fruit or vegetables	1/2 cup	Small computer mouse
Beans or hot cereal	1/2 cup	2 golf balls
Peanut butter, spreads	2 tablespoons	Pong-pong ball
Deli meat, sliced cheese	2–3 ounces	2–3 CDs
Milk, yogurt, soup	8 ounces	Dinner coffee cup



ing, but it might seem slightly more manageable if you do it in 10-minute intervals. Take a brisk 10-minute walk in the morning, on lunch break, and in the evening—and you've got your 30 minutes in!

Of course, slightly more activity is preferable, so if you can get your 30 minutes in every day or add a few minutes during your five-day routine—that's even better.

Even if you can't achieve the recommended amount, don't fret. A recent University of Ulster (Northern Ireland) study showed that even low levels of weekly exercise (30 minutes of brisk walking three days per week) was enough to decrease blood pressure and improve overall fitness in a group of healthy, sedentary adults.

Here are some easy ways to work in extra exercise:

- Do housework
- Walk or bike to the store instead of driving
- Walk around while you talk on the phone
- Park farther away from your destination and walk the extra distance
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Join a fitness center near your work (go before, after, or on lunch)
- Plan outings that include physical activity (hiking, swimming, etc.)
- Take an extra lap or two around the mall when you shop
- Be an active volunteer

Adopt a Positive Attitude

Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right." His message is simple: To succeed, you must first believe in yourself. Give yourself the respect you deserve. Don't sabotage yourself by saying or thinking you'll never lose weight or be fit.

Visualize yourself achieving your goals and try not to obsess about impediments along the way.

If you are prone to negativity, make a daily list of all the good things you've done for your health or repeat self-validating statements. You should feel good about the steps you're taking to improve your health, no matter how slow the process!

The key to maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle is to use moderation. Never give up a food you love completely, or you will more than likely overindulge on it at some point. Instead, try

to limit your portion size and pair it with something healthier. If you've had an unhealthy day (or week), don't get lost. Just try to get back to your regular plan as soon as possible.

Always remember that having healthy diet and exercise practices will make you feel more energetic and confident, and may help you avoid a stroke, heart disease, certain kinds of cancer, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, liver disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, and gallbladder disease, just to name a few. So be good to your body, it's the only one you're going to get! ♦