

How to Eat for Health - or - Your “Diet” Is What You Eat Every Day

Talk during meals, but not with your mouth full! – Distractions, especially television, prevent your body from knowing when you are full. Conversation makes mealtime family time and can help you eat more slowly.

Use a plate – Eating from a bag, box or carton prevents you from seeing how much food you are planning to eat – a very important cue to prevent over-eating.

Always eat at a table – Like sleeping, eating should have a special place dedicated just for that need. Stopping to eat at the table lets your mind and body focus only on that.

Use smaller plates/cups/bowls – Seeing the amount of food you will eat, prepares your mind and body for how full you will feel – small plates “fool” the brain to see “more food and less plate.” A coffee mug or teacup of ice cream is just as tasty as a cereal bowl full.

Eat less “white” food – Simple sugars (sugar or corn syrup), fats and oils (margarine, butter, shortening), and bleached flour products (white bread, donuts, etc) easily become extra fat in the body. “White” foods like potatoes or rice are less healthy than brightly colored fruits and vegetables, whole wheat, and low-fat (not fried) meats.

Know servings sizes – Foods are often packaged or sold as if they were intended for a single serving, but the amount of food in the package is actually more than one serving. The average serving of pasta should be 1 to 1/2 cups, but most restaurants use 2 to 3 cups. A standard adult-sized serving of meat is the size of a pack of playing cards – and weighs about 3 ounces (~1/5 of a pound). It has about 25 grams of protein, more than half the daily requirement for most adults.

Pay attention to “seconds” – Finish what is on your plate before taking another serving of your favorite food. It’s best to wait at least 5 minutes after finishing before eating more.

Learn to read a food label – Read the ingredients, and watch out for corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, HFCS or sugar. If the ingredients don’t sound like food, why would you want to eat them? Other important food label information: serving size, calories per serving and number of calories from fat. If a food has more than 20% of calories from fat, this food should be eaten in small amounts (if at all).

Have fun being more active -Turn off the TV, computer or video games. People are not made to sit around. Physical activity reduces weight and decreases risks of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, depression, weak bones, and many other problems.

Watch what you drink – Sports drinks, soft drinks, and even juice supply 10-15% of a person’s calories – this only leads to extra fat. Water is the best thing to drink during and between meals. Some 100% fruit juice is not terrible, but eating the actual fruit is healthier. For kids aged 1 through 8, 2 cups (16 ounces) of low-fat dairy products a day

is fine, for older children and adults, dairy should be limited to 3 cups per day. Remember, sugary drinks have empty calories that have very little or no nutritional value.

Start the day with some protein– a high-protein breakfast is a better start than a bowl of sweet cereal, toast, a donut, a toaster pastry or even a granola bar. Try an egg sandwich or some almonds and sunflower seeds on top of your whole grain cereal.

Prepackage snacks in single serving sized baggies-We tend to eat a lot more when we have the package or bag of a snack in our hands, often to where we can justify finishing what is left there. Use sandwich or snack sized baggies to measure out the “forbidden” snacks like chips, crackers, cookies, or other treats. Limit yourself to one or two per day, if you can.