

General Healthy Eating

Eating habits are hard to change when you've been following them for a long time. However, gradual modifications can make a big difference in the long run and new habits can be formed. The biggest thing you can do to change your diet is to become aware of your eating habits.

Be Aware of What You're Eating:

Of course we always want to aim to eat the healthiest foods that we can. Try and figure out what foods will give you the most nutrients with the least amount of empty calories (learn about empty vs. good calories in the lesson 'Good Calories vs. Empty Calories'). Following portion size is also key. It's good to know how much an appropriate serving size is and that you're keeping the amount of food you're eating in check. Make conscious decisions about the types of food you eat and strive to eat unprocessed food as much as possible. Unprocessed foods tend to have the least amount of chemicals in them and most health benefits. Organic food may not be as important as some people think, but making substitutions on food with better quality is a good idea. Try to eat whole grain bread that hasn't been processed or meats that haven't been treated to ensure quality and nutrient dense meals. Focus on eating clean food that has been properly prepared to eat.

Identify Things to Change:

A standard guideline to follow is to eat 3-5 substantial meals a day. These should be spread throughout the day with each meal containing proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Proteins, fats, and carbohydrates will provide your body with the necessary energy to perform your daily exercise.

Eating healthy snacks during the day is also a great way to keep an active metabolism. Eat small snacks in between meals to avoid hunger and keep up your daily energy. Depending upon your unique goals and body composition, timing and type of snacks will vary; however, try to decrease the amount of snacking later in the night.

Take Baby Steps. Change is Gradual:

Make sure you know that you're eating because you are hungry, rather than having cravings for food. Avoid eating for emotional reasons and keep in mind that 'food is fuel' for your body rather than your brain. If you find yourself in a social situation and feel the need to eat, you can still make health conscious decisions. Don't feel pressured into something you don't need to do and you can usually find decent alternatives to enjoy yourself with others. Eating food is an enjoyable experience, and it's okay to treat yourself once in a while. Put a limit on how much you eat and learn to enjoy your favorite foods in smaller quantities.



Activity Option:

- **Healthy foods vs. unhealthy foods:**
 - Divide the team into groups of 2 or 3 people.
 - Pass out pieces of paper (or notecards) with food items listed on them (i.e. potato chips, apple, whole wheat pasta, etc.)
 - There should be about 5 (give or take) notecards per group.
 - Once all notecards are passed out, yell “Go!”
 - Each group needs to collaborate and decide if the food item is healthy or unhealthy.
 - One person from each group places the notecard under the category the team decides is appropriate.
 - The first group to have all notecards under the appropriate labels wins!
- **Notes:**
 - Team members can write on a chalkboard or stick notecards to a wall/chalkboard.
 - Team members can place notecards on a desk or table with appropriate labels of “Healthy” and “Unhealthy.”

