

Strategies For A Healthy Diet

You've made a commitment to eat healthier foods—now it's time to figure out how to make that commitment last. Start thinking about your eating habits the way you think about your career, managing money or other important priorities. Here are some specific strategies for success:

Strategy #1: Get Nutritional Value

One of the most important strategies for eating better is to plan your meals ahead of time. Don't wait until you're too hungry or don't have enough time to find or prepare a healthy option. When planning your meals, try to include at least one food that provides high nutritional value.

- Focus on getting more lean proteins, low-fat dairy products and plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit or avoid "empty" calories from white bread, white rice and sweets (even the low-fat kind!). These foods don't have much nutritional value, and since they lack fiber, they're less likely to keep you feeling full.
- If you make just one change per meal—such as adding more veggies and having fewer meatballs on your pasta—you can make a big impact on your diet.

Strategy #2: Do It Yourself!

Sometimes if you want to do a project the right way, you have to do it yourself. Remember, restaurants, take-out venues and pizza places are not in business to watch your diet. That's your business. So whenever possible, try to prepare your own food. This doesn't mean you have to be a gourmet chef! If you're short on time, look for ready-made meals and healthy frozen entrées at the supermarket.

Strategy #3: Eat Often (*but not too much!*)

The good news about healthy eating is you get plenty of chances to eat! You'll find you can maximize your energy level by spacing meals and snacks evenly throughout the day. Don't

go for long periods without eating. Shoot for at least three meals and one or two snacks to keep you energized throughout your day.

Strategy #4: Snack Right!

Meals are important, but one of the quickest ways to improve your diet is by eating healthier snacks. By making just a few small changes you can ditch some of the worst parts of your diet and find new opportunities to add nutrients. Here are a few healthy snack ideas:

- Air-popped popcorn
- Any fresh fruit
- Raw, colorful veggies like baby carrots, grape tomatoes, sugar snap peas and sliced peppers for dipping in low-fat dressing, low-fat dip or hummus
- Sliced apples or celery to dip in all-natural peanut butter

Strategy #5: Fit in Your Veggies!

Look for meal ideas that include vegetables you'll actually enjoy.

- **Start with soup:** Vegetable purees and vegetable soups are a great way to start a meal. They're filling and hearty.
- **Add color!** If your meal looks like a rainbow with red tomatoes, green leafy vegetables and orange carrots, then you're on your way to a healthier diet. Colorful veggies give you a nutritional boost to fill you up on fewer calories.
- **Let someone else do the work!** Most supermarkets offer a variety of veggies that are pre-washed and pre-cut. It's worth the additional cost if you're more likely to get these foods in your diet!

QuickTakes

Basic Nutrition Recommendations



The following guidelines can help you meet your daily nutrient requirements without consuming too many calories:

- **Grains**—Look for "whole grain" as the first or second ingredient on breads, cereals and grain products; **aim for 3 servings a day.**
- **Vegetables**—Include dark greens, bright oranges and deep reds; **consume at least 2 ½ cups a day.**
- **Fruits**—Choose from fresh, frozen or dried fruit, but go easy on the juices; **consume 2 cups a day.**
- **Protein**—Go for lean meats, poultry or fish and include beans and nuts to get the **5 ½ ounces you need a day.**
- **Milk**—Include **3 servings** of low-fat/nonfat dairy products or calcium-fortified foods.

Portion Distortion

We have all heard the mantra “watch your portion size” but few of us really know how to do this. The following visual clues can help you to deal with portion distortion:

Divide & Conquer

Try this test to see if your meal has the right ratio of vegetables to protein to starches:

- Split up your dinner plate into four blocks;
- Two blocks should be vegetables;
- One should have a lean protein;
- One should be a starch, preferably whole grain and high in fiber.

Hand-y Guide To Portion Sizes

1. Meat servings are smaller than you think!

A serving of meat is about 3 ounces cooked, that's about the size of your palm minus your fingers and thumb.

2. Have healthy snacks by the handful.

One handful equals about an ounce of foods, such as nuts. For snacks like chips and pretzels, two handfuls equals one ounce — the serving size listed on most snack-food labels.

3. Keep yourself to a thumb full of cheese.

In general, one thumb-size chunk is about one ounce of cheese.

4. Restrict those high-fat spreads.

Restrict portions of high-fat spreads like butter, peanut butter and mayonnaise to a teaspoon — about the size of the top part of your thumb.

Size Matters

Knowing the number of ounces or cups in a portion helps you control the number of calories in your food, too.

- One portion of meat or other protein is 3 ounces.
- One portion of rice, pasta or potato is 1/2 cup.
- One portion of vegetables or fruit is 1 to 2 cups.

Examples of Portions

One serving of fruit or non-starchy vegetable equals:

- 1 cup raw vegetables
- 1/2 cup cooked vegetables or vegetable juice
- 1 small fresh fruit
- 1 cup berries or melon
- 1/2 cup canned or fresh fruit or unsweetened fruit juice
- 1/4 cup dried fruit

One serving of grain or starchy vegetable equals:

- 1 slice bread, 1/2 roll, English muffin or small bagel
- 3/4 cup cold cereal
- 1/2 cup cooked cereal, pasta, rice, beans or lentils
- 1/2 cup potatoes, peas or corn

One serving of a protein food equals:

- 3 oz. poultry, lean meat or seafood
- 1/2 cup tofu or tempeh
- 8 oz. low-fat or skim milk
- 6 oz. plain fat-free yogurt
- 1 egg or 2 egg whites
- 1 oz. low-fat cheese
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter

Southwest Summer Stir Fry

Makes: 4 servings | 30 minutes

Take advantage of sweet corn now that it's in season. This recipe can be easily doubled for a larger gathering.

Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 small zucchini, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 1/2 cups fresh corn kernels (cut from 3 ears corn)
- 1 large tomato, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Tabasco or other hot sauce
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped dry-roasted peanuts

Preparation:



1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add zucchini, green peppers and onions and cook, stirring until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in cumin and cook for a few seconds, then add corn and cook until it is just tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, honey, salt and hot sauce and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in cilantro or parsley and sprinkle with peanuts.

Nutritional Information (per serving):

120 Calories; 3.2g Fat; 0.4g Saturated Fat; 3g Protein; 0g Trans Fat; 29g Carbohydrates; 3.6g Fiber; 191mg Sodium