AMA Healthier Life Steps® | A patient-physician partnership for a longer, healthier life

Action plan for healthy eating

How to reach your goal of healthy eating
Every day:
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Slow down and enjoy your food. Pay attention to when you feel hungry or full
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks
- Eat mostly whole grains instead of white flour, white rice or other refined grains
- Avoid large portions
- Compare salt (sodium) on food labels and choose the foods with lower numbers
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk

What are the benefits?
Healthy eating is good for everybody—not just people trying to lose weight. It is not always easy, but even small changes, over time, can add up and improve your health. Eating healthier can help you:
- Feel less tired and have more energy
- Keep a healthy weight or lose weight
- Prevent or control on-going diseases, such as:
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart disease
  - Stroke
  - Diabetes
  - Cancer
  - Osteoporosis (bone thinning)

What's stopping you from eating healthier?
Does this sound like you?
- “Healthy food will not taste good.”
  Try different fruits and vegetables to find the ones you like.
- “I don’t have enough time to make—or money to buy—healthy foods.”
  Save time and money by planning ahead. On the weekends, fix food for the week. Look for healthy foods that are on sale.
- “I don’t like making changes.”
  If you cannot give up an unhealthy food item, limit how much and how often you eat it.

Take the first steps to eating healthy.
Choose one or two of the steps below or write in one of your own.
☐ Snack on fruit instead of candy bars or cookies
☐ Have at least one cup of vegetables (cooked or raw) at dinner
☐ Choose 100% whole-wheat bread instead of white bread
☐ Instead of soda or juice drinks, drink water or tea without sugar
☐ When eating out, eat only half of the food on your plate. Bring the rest home for another meal
☐ Pack your lunch one day a week instead of eating out
☐ Take at least 20 minutes to eat every meal

My first healthy eating step: ____________________________________________________________
My start date: ____________________________________________________________

Track your progress on the healthy eating calendar.

Did you know?
- Frozen fruits and vegetables usually have as many nutrients as fresh
- Brown rice has more fiber than white rice
- Most fruit drinks, iced teas and vitamin waters have large amounts of added sugars

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Next steps

1. Add one new step to your plan each week or month, such as:
   — I will eat two more servings of vegetables each day
   — I will eat 100% whole-wheat bread instead of white
   — I will not add salt to my food

2. Over time, you’ll find yourself eating healthy foods more often and eating less healthy foods less often.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose these more often</th>
<th>Choose these less often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruits (fresh, frozen, canned or dried)</td>
<td>High-calorie or sugary snacks and fried foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned or dried)</td>
<td>Fatty meat and processed meat (deli ham, sausage, bacon, hot dogs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains (100% whole wheat, brown rice, oatmeal, etc.)</td>
<td>Salt (sodium) and salty foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water or low-calorie beverages</td>
<td>Sugary drinks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Try new foods and recipes that will help you eat healthier.

4. Learn to read “Nutrition Facts” labels like this one. They list the calories and unhealthy saturated fat, trans fat and salt (sodium) in food products. How do those compare to how much you eat or drink now?

**Tips for success**

- Plan ahead to be ready for times when it may be harder to follow your healthy eating steps (illness, busy at work, vacations, etc.)
- Choose the healthiest foods and drinks you can (like grilled instead of fried foods)
- Eat slowly and enjoy your food—give your body time to realize you’re full
- If you eat unhealthy foods one day, try to do better the next day
- Stick with it. If what you are doing is not working, try something else
- Talk with your doctor if you think you need extra help in reaching your goal(s)

**Remember, you’re not going on a diet. You are creating healthier eating habits to last a lifetime.**

For more information, please visit ama-assn.org/go/healthierlifesteps