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# What My Papa Told Me About... HEALTHY FOOD

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# HEALTHY FOOD

## Why Breakfast Really is the Most Important Meal of the Day

By now, I'm sure you've heard people say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. However, that doesn't stop millions of Americans, and people around the world, from skipping breakfast or opting for only a drink of coffee. The truth is that breakfast really is the most important meal of the day, and you will have a much more healthy diet if you include breakfast in your daily life.

Breakfast is rightly named—break fast. When you sleep, you are not eating for 6 to 9 hours at least, and more if you haven't eaten since dinner the night before. Therefore, breakfast is the first time you'll be eating anything for a very long period of time. Some nutrients, like proteins, cannot be stored in the body and are therefore not present, so the body needs you to replenish the "low" levels of such nutrients. Breakfast is like the match that lights the fire. It truly is a very important source of energy for your body in the morning.

Eating breakfast in the morning also helps you avoid some illnesses and disease. For example, your sugar levels are probably out of whack from not eating for many hours, so having breakfast levels out the amount of sugars in your body, helping to prevent diabetes. Eating a healthy breakfast also helps you to provide food to your stomach so that you don't overeat at lunch because you are so hungry. Overeating leads to obesity, which comes with a whole host of problems, including heart disease.

Healthy breakfast foods, like eggs, fruit, or bran cereal are also a good source of many of the vitamins and minerals a person needs during the day. If you don't eat these things in the morning, it will be hard to make up for that loss later in the day. Remember that without the proper amounts of nutrients, your body will not function correctly. When you eat a healthy breakfast, it also makes you choose healthier foods during the rest of the day, so that you continue to get the proper nutrients needed for your body.

Setting aside 15 minutes in the morning to eat breakfast every day can truly make a great difference in your diet. In the best case, your breakfast will include foods from at least three different food groups. For example, you can have whole grain toast (bread food group) with peanut butter (protein food group) and a banana (fruit food group). Top that off with a glass of milk to drink, and you've even hit a fourth food group. Breakfast does not have to include a heavy pancakes and sausage meal every day to be healthy, and even grabbing a single piece of fruit or a muffin is better than skipping the meal completely. Breakfast is important to your health!

## Healthy Eating with Little Money

If you are interesting in eating a healthy diet compared to your current diet, I have good news or you—you don't have to be rich to do so. It is fully possible to involve yourself in healthy eating, even if you are on a very tight budget. This may require a little bit of extra time and effort to plan your meals, but you can make good and inexpensive food choice in order to provide your body with excellent nutrition.

First, it is important to plan for your healthy diet. When you go shopping, take a list with you of the healthy foods you need to purchase instead of walking up and down the aisles without a plan. When you have a shopping list, you are less likely to purchase random junk foods that you do not need, and so you'll save money as well as be good to your health. Planning ahead with a list also allows you to look through store sales fliers in order to choose healthy foods that are offered at discount prices that week in particular. When you do go shopping, make sure that it is not on an empty stomach, when you will be craving fattening foods and will be more likely to overspend and waste money on unhealthy products.

You should also consider purchasing items in bulk. Many club stores have a membership fee, but you can save a lot of money if you have an adequate amount of freezer and pantry space. Look at the healthy foods you need, and then head to the bulk-food supply store in order to grab enough of the item for the next month. Remember to choose foods that are both healthy and the freeze readily.

Eat at home as much as possible. When you go out to eat or stop at a fast food restaurant on your way to and from work or during your lunch break, you will pay extra money for the convenience of someone else preparing the food. These foods are also usually high in calories and low in nutrients. Instead, calculate the money you would normally spend to eat out and then use it to buy more expensive healthy ingredients at the supermarket. You can make breakfast and dinner and also pack a lunch to carry to work or school.

Purchase foods that are in season. Fresh fruits and vegetables are usually very high in nutrients, but when you want strawberries in January, you'll end up paying the extra price. Learn when fruits come into season in your climate and purchase them at those times of year. You can learn to can or otherwise preserve these fruits and vegetables if you want to have them all year round! Of course, heading to your local farmer's market is a great way to purchase these items and save money. Healthy eating on a budget is all about being creative with the money you do have.

## Carbohydrate Craze

Carbohydrates have been put into the spotlight ever since diets like the Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet have recommended cutting carbohydrates out of your meals as much as possible. However, before you make a drastic decision about what foods to include and not include, it is crucial to learn about carbohydrates and what they do for your body.

In short, carbohydrates can be good or bad for your body. It is necessary to eat enough good carbohydrates, because that is how our body has enough energy for low-intensity activities during the day. Carbohydrates are famously found in breads and grains, but actually they are also found in a number of other foods as well, such as fruits and vegetables. When keeping an eye on your intake of carbohydrates it is important to distinguish the good from the bad.

All carbohydrates are basically sugars. Complex carbohydrates are the good carbohydrates for your body. These strings of sugar are very difficult to break down and trap over nutrients like vitamins and minerals in the sugar strings. As they slowly break down, the other nutrients are also released into your body, and you can provide with fuel for a number of hours.

Bad carbohydrates, on the other hand, are simple sugars. Because their structure is not complex, it is easy to break down and holds little nutrients for your body other than the sugars from which it is made. Your body breaks down these carbohydrates rather quickly and what it cannot use is converted to fat and stored in the body. Staying away from simple carbohydrates is what most diets recommend, since they have little nutritional value when compared to complex carbohydrates.

More importantly than how carbohydrates work in the body and the difference between good carbohydrates and bad carbohydrates is how you can actually eat these carbohydrates! First, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. These foods include carbohydrates, but also a variety of other nutrients needed by your body. Another great tip is to cut the white bread and bread products out of your diet and replace them with whole wheat or 12-grain breads instead. Look at the packaging. Foods rich in fiber are probably a source of good carbohydrates.

Learning the difference between good and bad carbohydrates is very important if you wish to have a healthy diet. It is not good for your body to cut out carbohydrates completely—in fact, that is very difficult to do unless you only eat meat! Eating a healthy and balanced diet means including good carbohydrates into your meals.

## **Making the Grade with Healthy Eating**

College is one of the most difficult times of life to practice healthy eating. Because of your busy schedule, the amounts of stress, and pressure from friends to party, you may find that healthy eating is impossible. However, with a few tips you can make the impossible seem much more manageable. Healthy eating is possible in college as long as you are willing to work at it.

Make smart decisions when you are eating at your college's cafeteria. Most students are provided with a variety of option every day, and although the dessert bar may be very tempting, try to limit the number of times you visit it every week. If your school has a buffet style cafeteria with many choices, try to choose one food from each of the food groups. Avoid anything that is processed, covered in cheese or dressing, and greasy.

Scheduling times to eat is also important. When you register for classes, look at the day with meals in mind. You should have enough time in the morning to get ready for the day and grab a quick meal, either in your dorm room or at the cafeteria. Around the middle of the day, make sure that you save time for lunch, and have a timeslot for dinner before 7 PM to avoid eating late at night. You should also plan times to stop for nutritious snacks, like fruit. If your professor does not mind, you can also take these snack foods with you to class. This is a good question to ask during the first day of classes.

The weekends can be very challenging for college students because of the pressure to go to parties, where the main food is usually pizza and the main beverage is usually beer. Order pizza and other foods can take an otherwise healthy diet and throw it down the tubes. If you plan to go out for the night and won't be sure if there will be healthy food choices available, grab a light meal before you leave and avoid greasy calories. Having pizza and other such "college" foods, like wings or tacos, can be fine once in awhile, but if it becomes a weekly event, you're looking at trouble

Of course, alcohol is also a great way to ruin a diet. Beer and mixed drinks have a lot of empty calories, and so skipping them altogether is a great idea. If you must drink, choose diet sodas for mixing your drinks, ask for red wine if it is available, or drink light beer. Again, these treat are fine once in awhile, because drinking alcohol every week will only make you pack on the pounds.

### **Three Deadly Eating Disorders**

Healthy eating is very important for our everyday lives, but unfortunately, many people develop problems with body image with prevent them from this healthy eating lifestyle. Eating disorders vary greatly from person to person, but one thing remains constant—they are very detrimental to a person's health. If you or someone you know suffers from an eating disorder, it is important to seek help as soon as possible.

The first kind of eating disorder that a person may develop is anorexia. Anorexia occurs when someone is overly concerned with weight and simply refuses to eat. Someone suffering from this disease usually tries to hide it by discarding the food without anyone knowing, cutting the food into small pieces to make it look smaller, or lying about skipping entire meals. Anorexia is dangerous because it does not allow a person to lose weight in a healthy way. Cutting fat out of a diet is fine, but not getting enough proteins, vitamins, minerals, water, and other nutrients can make your body lose muscle weight and weaken.

Another major type of eating disorder is bulimia. While you may notice an anorexic person losing lots of weight in a hurry, someone who has bulimia may or may not be losing weight. If a person has bulimia, he or she does not have the will power to give up foods, but instead vomits or uses laxatives after meals to rid the body of these foods. Like anorexia, this can rob the body of key



nutrients, and it can also lead to problems in the digestive system, throat, and mouth, which are not made for regular induced vomiting.

The third main type of eating disorder is binge eating. This is a combination of anorexia and bulimia in most cases. A binge eater will, like a bulimic, not deprive his- or herself from food. In fact, someone who is a binge eater will eat enormous amounts of food in a single sitting, and often these foods are not high in nutritional value. Instead of vomiting, a binge eater will then refuse to eat at all and exercise rigorously for a day or two, but then slip into a binge once again. This leads to major problems with weight.

Eating disorders can effect bother males and females, as well as people of any race, ethnicity, or age. Most commonly, victims of eating disorders are teen and young adult girls. Many people die every year due to complications with eating disorders, but if you or someone you know suffers from this problem, help is available.

### **Eating Healthy for your Heart**

Your heart is one of the most important organs in the body, and the foods you put into your mouth effect how your heart operates. If you want your heart to be strong and able to pump blood as well as possible all over your body, it is important for you to eat a healthy diet. Heart-healthy foods are readily available in the supermarket, so choose some that work for your personal likes and you should be able to help prevent heart disease in your own body.

Cholesterol is the most important thing when it comes to eating heart-healthy foods. There are both good cholesterol and bad cholesterol. Good cholesterol are called HDL, and their job in the body is to take excess bad cholesterol (LDL) to the liver, where it can be broken down and then will leave the body. LDL is actually not needed by your body at all from foods. Our bodies make enough of this kind of cholesterol on its own. It is the LDL cholesterol that hurts our hearts, not the HDL cholesterol, which actually helps our hearts be reducing the amount of LDL cholesterol in the body.

LDL stands for low-density lipoproteins. Because this substance has a low density, it does not flow through the blood stream as readily as it should. The red blood cells easily release the LDL cholesterol and it sticks to the walls of your blood vessels, especially in the arteries leading to your heart. This is bad for a number of reasons.

First, when the LDL cholesterol builds up on your arteries, it reduces the amount of blood that can fit through at a time, since the artery becomes smaller. That means your heart has to pump harder and faster in order to allow the same amount of blood to flow through your body. Over time, this makes your heart tired and not as strong. In the worst-case scenario, the blood vessel becomes so built up with LDL cholesterol that your artery could close completely. When this happens, your heart essentially panics because it is not getting the blood it needs and it starts beating rapidly to try to pump the blood. This causes a heart attack.



You can also have a heart attack from LDL cholesterol build up if a piece of the build-up, called plaque, breaks off and floats down the blood stream. When it reaches a smaller part of the blood vessel, it will get stuck and block the blood, which again causes a heart attack. If the piece of plaque travels to the brain instead of the heart, it will cause a blockage in this area of the body, which in turn causes a stroke. Therefore, it is simply important to cut out of your diet the foods high in cholesterol so that you can prevent heart disease and other problems in the body.

## **The Importance of Healthy Eating**

Have you ever heard the saying you are what you eat? In some sense, this is true, because if you eat unhealthy foods you are prone to be an unhealthy person. The foods we ingest are extremely important to our ability to grow, maintain function, and prevent illness. Therefore, if you value your health, you should learn as much about healthy eating as possible.

Healthy eating is important from the day we are born. As a child, we grow quite rapidly and this is due in part to the foods we eat. Foods all contain nutrients that provide us not only with fuel to live our daily lives, but also with the very substances that build our bones, muscles, and organ tissues. Not getting enough of one nutrient or another can cause a variety of problems, including stunting our growth. For mothers who are nursing, nutrition is important because breast milk contains the nutrients a child needs to grow and develop properly. Upon growing older, these nutrients are then found in food, but don't think that healthy eating isn't important for growth after you've gone through puberty. Cells continuously break down and rebuild, so healthy eating for growth continues to be important until the day we die.

Maintaining function is also not important without healthy eating. In our daily lives, we use energy to think, walk, talk, breathe, and perform any other action. The energy it takes our body to do these things comes from two places: fat reserves in the body or our daily food intake. If you don't eat healthy foods, you will find that you are storing more fat than necessary or that you aren't getting enough and you feel sluggish or weak. Along with energy-providing nutrients, like fats and carbohydrates, we also need the right nutrients to allow our organs to do their jobs. Hormones and other substances in the body make sure that everything is working properly. If you don't eat the right nutrients, your body cannot produce these hormones and, as a result, cannot function properly.

Lastly, healthy eating is important in order to prevent illness. When we do not get the right nutrients, or body's natural defense system against diseases weakens, allowing viruses and bacteria to attack the body. It's like a well-trained army—if the army doesn't have enough to eat, it will not do well in battle. Without healthy foods and plenty of water, our bodies simply could not operate on a day-to-day basis. Learning how to eat healthy foods is therefore an important lesson, and one which we should begin learning as children.

## **Healthy Lunches with Style**

Lunch is an important meal in your day, so don't skip it, even if you are tempted to do so. Many people believe that eating a big breakfast means that lunch is unnecessary, but that's simply not the case. When you don't eat lunch, you are more likely to snack during the day on unhealthy foods or overeat at suppertime. Your body also becomes depleted of nutrients when you skip lunch, so it's better for you to always eat lunch, even if it means making a bit of extra free time available in your day. However, there are ways in which you can ensure that your lunch is fairly healthy, no matter what your specific needs.

If you are at work or school over lunchtime, you can save lots of money by carrying a lunch rather than grabbing lunch from a fast food restaurant or other food source. Your own meals will also be more nutritious and, in many cases, tastier. If you are not a morning person, packing a lunch doesn't mean that you have to wake up earlier to prepare this. Simply pack it the night before. Many food choices can help you to pack a lunch that will be the envy of your coworkers.

You can also consider stopping at a supermarket and picking up frozen diet meals for lunch as well. These meals are usually low in fat and high in nutrition and come in enough varieties for you to have a different lunch every day of the year. This option is sometimes a bit more expensive than making and packing your own lunch, but it can still be fairly inexpensive. Remember to look at the packaging to determine the best frozen meals for you. Some are not made for those looking for a healthy diet, and although they may taste good, they will be full of preservatives and calories.

You can also stock your desk at work with healthy lunch choices in order to save time. Lots of foods come in non-perishable varieties, which can easily fit into your desk and be microwaved with water when it comes time to eat lunch. Try soups, pretzels, crackers with peanut butter, cereal bars, or instant oatmeal for lunchtime at the office.

When you have to eat out, such as if you are meeting an associate or client for lunch, make healthy food choices. Avoid skipping lunch altogether just to have a meeting. Instead, see if your company will chip in to pay for the client's meal. Usually, companies are more than happy to reimburse you or provide a company credit card or tab information. Good choices for lunch include light meals, like wraps, sandwiches with wheat bread and light on the spreads, salads with light dressing, and fruit. Avoid fast food, pizza, and bulky meals, like pasta for lunch, unless you plan to be very active during the afternoon at work.

## **Nutrients You Need**

Healthy eating requires you to eat a number of nutrients every day. In fact, there are 40 different nutrients you need to ingest in order to keep your body healthy. That's a lot of nutrients you need to know about! Luckily, you can break down all of these nutrients into smaller categories in order to keep them organized in your mind and make sure you get all of the foods you need.

First and foremost, everyone needs water in order to live a healthy life. Without water, we become dehydrated, and eventually die. You lose water when you sweat and through daily bodily functions, so water must be replenished. Drinking about 8 glasses a day is recommended. Of course, water is found in food as well as in drinks, so you can get your 8 glasses by eating foods like watermelon.

Of course, we need much more than water every day to survive. Another group of nutrients we can't do without is proteins. Proteins are found in foods such as meat, eggs, and soy products. They provide the amino acids needed to build muscle tissue as well as help make some of the hormones in our bodies. Red blood cells and hair is also made from protein.

Along with proteins, a body also needs adequate amounts of fats and carbohydrates in order for us to have enough energy during the day. Fats are primarily used for energy during intense activity, like exercising, while carbohydrates are primarily used for energy during less intense activities, like standing, sitting, and other movements. Both the fats and the carbohydrates that we eat in a day can be stored for later use as fat, so it is important to eat enough for energy, but also important to regulate intake in order to stay slim and healthy. In the event that you are not eating enough fats and carbohydrates, your body can also provide itself with fuel from proteins.

Vitamins and minerals are also important nutrients for our daily lives. We get these from fruits, vegetables, milk, and most natural sources of food. Some of our foods, such as bread products, can even be enriched so that we get more vitamins and minerals in our bodies. There are dozens that you need to ingest regularly, such as iron, thiamine, vitamin C, and vitamin D. If you are eating a healthy diet, you can most likely get enough vitamins and minerals from your foods, but you can also take vitamin supplements to make sure that you are getting the right amounts you need to maintain body function. Supplements may also be available to help with other nutrients as well, so if you are worried, talk to your doctor about how you can be sure to be eating a healthy amount of nutrients.

## **Why You Need Protein**

When learning about healthy eating, one of the most important nutrients is protein. Of course, all nutrients are crucial for our bodies to be as healthy as possible, but without protein in our diets every single day, our bodies will not be as strong as they should be. Protein can be found in a number of food sources, so if you're interested in eating a healthier diet, you should consider learning more about protein.

We need to eat foods rich in protein every day because, unlike some other nutrients, it cannot be stored in the body. That means that if you eat more protein than necessary, your body will simply cause it to pass through your system. Therefore, you really can't eat too much protein! However, because protein cannot be stored in the body problems may arise surrounding this nutrient as well. If you don't get enough protein on any given day, your body has no back-up plan for producing protein on its own or using reserved protein from previous days. Therefore, protein is very important to consider when you are planning your meals.

Essentially, protein builds muscles, which is why you will see bodybuilders especially concerned with protein. When you lift weights to work out, your body makes tiny tears in the muscles. Proteins are then used to repair these healthy tears in the body, building the muscle slightly bigger with every workout. Even if you do not work out, your body's muscle deteriorates, as your body needs the energy. Muscle provides energy, just like fat. Having protein in the body helps you to rebuild any muscle lost.

Protein also helps a person's body in other ways, mainly with the maintenance of hormones. Hormones in the body do a number of things, such as regulate organ function, account for stimulation, create metabolism, and affect mood. Proteins are used in the making of some of these different hormones, so if you go more than a day or two without eating foods rich in proteins, your entire body will suffer.

How can you make sure that you're getting enough proteins? Simply put, look for foods with protein as a key component on the label. Some great foods to consider include chicken, beef, pork, eggs, and fish, although vegetarians can also get proteins into their diets by eating nuts, beans, soy products, and a variety of other foods. You should have some of these foods in your diet every single day to ensure that you are providing your body with the proteins it needs to stay healthy.

### **Is Organic Worth It?**

When you head to the grocery store, shopping for products like eggs, meat, fish, milk, and produce can be very tricky. Signs are posted everywhere labeling food as natural, organic, and a number of other things—but what's the difference, really? Learning what specific names mean can help you decide if you should shell out extra money on a product if it is simply a marketing ploy.

Natural is a term associated with a number of fruit and vegetable products. Typically, this is simply a marketing ploy to convince you to buy the product. After all, all fruits and vegetables are natural, right? Unless it's a new kind of food that has been developed and processed, the product is natural. What you really probably want is organic. Organic foods are grown without chemical pesticides and fertilizers. There are two main benefits to organic foods. First, you are helping the environment because those chemicals are not being introduced into nature. Secondly, you are avoiding ingesting chemicals and are therefore eating more healthy foods. However, organic products are usually more expensive. If you're on a budget, skip over organic fruits and vegetables that you can peel, like oranges and bananas. After all, once you've discarded the peel, you've also discarded the chemicals. Instead, opt for organic items like apples, where you eat the peel. No matter what you buy, however, make sure that you rinse off the food when you get home.

Another tricky label you will see is "no hormones." This is usually in regards to milk or meat products and is false, since all animals naturally produce hormones. Hormones are what helps an

animal (even a human) regulate body organs, have young, and otherwise function. All meat products have hormones. What the labels really mean is that no hormones were unnaturally given to the animal, which is sometimes done to increase milk production. Regardless of hormones, however, the milk and meat is safe for a person and not a violation of an animal's rights.

Lastly, a label on eggs and meat can indicate if the animal was caged or penned. This does not make a difference in the quality or nutritional value of the meat, but is simply a matter of animal rights. These products may be a bit more expensive, but if you want to make human decisions, that is the way to go. Reading the label and making healthy choices can sometimes be difficult, but learning how to do so can help you make the best choices for you diet.

### **Just Say No: Healthy Eating and Peer Pressure**

If you are on a diet or simply enjoying a healthy lifestyle, than you probably know that peer pressure to eat foods that are not good for you is a major part of your life. If you are worried about the food that goes into your mouth, don't worry—there are ways to overcome peer pressure. It simply takes a little know-how to get people off your back!

Parties are a major source of peer pressure, especially with alcohol. However, remember that alcohol contains hundreds of empties calories in just one drink. When you go to a part, people might be pressuring you to have a drink and relax, and it can be difficult to say no when they are constantly trying to convince you. Instead, offer to drive to a bar instead. This way, you're the designated driver, so people won't want you to drink and, in fact, they will probably be purchasing you waters and maybe even helping to pay for your gas. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

Another time when you may feel pressured to eat is at work when the boss orders lunch for everyone at a meeting or when you have to visit a client. Instead of giving in to temptation, simply politely decline the food by letting your boss know in advance or order a meal that is healthy and split the portion in half so you have a meal for tomorrow's lunch as well.

Baby showers, weddings, birthday parties, and other special events can also wreak havoc on your diet, even if you are good at resisting temptation on your own. When someone hands you a piece of cake and won't take no for an answer, it can be difficult to know what to say! Here, little white lies might be appropriate. For instance, saying that your stomach was upset earlier in the day will convince a person that you don't want to eat at the moment or pretending to have a chocolate allergy will get people to allow you to enjoy the party without a hassle surrounding food.

Remember, however, that while refusing bad foods is fine, you should be eating good foods. If you do not, dangerous eating habits and disorders can develop, which will give you, your friends, and your doctor a real reason to worry. It's ok to say no to peer pressure, but don't say no to food in general!

## Healthy Eating at a Restaurant: Is it Possible?

If you and your family love to eat at restaurants, you may think that this lifestyle is not good for a healthy diet. In many cases, you would be correct. However, you can still enjoy restaurants occasionally and maintain your healthy diet. It's all about making good food choices, which starts with learning about the nutrition you need to stay happy, physically healthy, mentally stable, and active.

When you pick up the menu, start by skipping over the drink section. Although you may be tempted to enjoy a beer or mixed beverage with your dinner, these usually have many empty calories, which is not good for your body. The exception to this rule when it comes to alcohol is wine, especially red wine, which can be fine if you have a single glass and can actually help prevent heart disease for some patients.

Also skip over the appetizer menu, unless it's too over a side salad. The appetizers at restaurants are usually high-fat foods that are not meant to fill you up and can in fact make you crave even more high fat foods. Examples of these are mozzarella sticks, potato skins, and wings. Instead, simply focus on your main course or, if you must indulge, share a single serving with the entire table of people.

When choosing your main dish, it is of course important that you look at the ingredients of the dish. Anything with cream sauces or high-fat meats should be avoided, and pass up the potatoes or onion rings. Instead order side dishes like vegetables or ask for just the main course when possible.

Remember too that portion is everything. Order off of the lunch menu whenever you can, and ask for a diggie bag right away. Split your meal in half from the start so that you are not tempted to eat the entire thing, which is usually enough for two or three portions.

At the end of your meal, stick over the desert menu, just like you did with the appetizers. Again, you can share a single desert with the entire table if you feel compelled to order something, or split your portion in half. Many fancy desserts at restaurants have more calories than your entire meal, so keep this in mind before you flag down the waitress to put in an order! Of course, on special occasions, it's alright to cheat a little, but overall healthy eating requires lots of resisting temptation around you.

## How to Start Healthy Eating

If you currently do not eat a healthy diet, it can be difficult to start such a plan. However, healthy eating is important for maintaining bodily function and living a disease-free life. If you struggle with healthy eating, then you know that breaking unhealthy habits can be the most

difficult part of the process. However, if you truly want to live the best lifestyle possible, it is important to follow tips in order to start eating a more healthy diet.

A good beginning step when you want to start eating more healthily is to rid your home of all foods that do not fit into healthy categories. Keep junk foods and beverages out of your house so that you will not be tempted to snack during the day. If you're worried about getting hungry, keep healthy snacks like carrot sticks, yogurt, fresh fruit, or whole-wheat crackers on hand. If you find that you just cannot bear to toss out the sweets, try keeping something tiny on hand, like chocolate chips. Eating a few of these won't ruin your diet but also will give you that little sugary fix you crave.

Another great step to healthy eating when you are first starting the process is to take a few moments to learn about what foods are the healthiest for you and how they work in the body. Most people understand that fruits, vegetables, and low-fat meats and dairy products are good for you, but few people understand why. The key is learning about nutrients. When you understand how specific nutrients work in the body, you will be more likely to make these healthy choices for your body. Knowledge really is power!

When cleansing yourself to prepare for a new healthy diet, you should also take into consideration your schedule for meals. If you often eat in a rushed hurry at odd times of day, you probably are not getting the best foods possible. Plan ahead! Instead of grabbing a fast food lunch on the go, take a bagged lunch to work, complete with a healthy wrap and some fresh vegetables. Plan ahead for healthy meals in the evening as well by cooking ahead if you are not currently getting healthy dinners and have little time to cook when you get home every night.

Start with baby steps. Even if you only replace one soda a day with a glass of water, you are really improve your calorie intake. If you eat fast food every day for lunch, try replacing that even half of the time. When you start by taking small steps, it does not seem like you are cutting out all of the foods you love and you can take your time to learn about healthy foods which you can love equally as well.

### **A Healthy Diet while Traveling**

Sticking to a healthy diet while traveling can be one of the most difficult things to do in your life. However, if you learn how to make smart choices, a healthy diet is really not that difficult. This is probably not the best time in which to start a healthy diet, but if you are currently making healthy choices in your foods already, modifying your diet slightly to accommodate travel is not as it first may seem.

If you are traveling by airplane, a healthy diet may have to include airplane food, which can often be poor for your health, depending on the selection. When you book your flight, ask about your food options and ask if a vegetarian dish is available. Vegetarian dishes are sometimes more nutritional in this case, but it really depends on what they will be serving. If you can, eat a



larger meal before your flight so that you don't have to eat the entire meal that is served to feel full.

When driving or taking a bus, you may be tempted to stop at fast food restaurants and eat the foods found there. Avoid this whenever possible! If you're on vacation, you may wish to splurge a tiny bit, but having fast food more than one during a week can really be bad for your health. If you must, choose the healthiest options available, like chicken breasts and diet soda.

Also, remember that you can take your own food when traveling. Carrying a loaf of whole-wheat bread or pita wraps, some lean lunchmeat, and low-fat cheese in a cooler is a great way to avoid high-fat and high-cholesterol junk food meals. These are much better choices and you'll save a lot of money as well. Call ahead to ask if there will be a refrigerator in your hotel room.

Lastly, make smart choices when you eat out. If you choose salads or pasta get the dressing on the side and ask about low-carb options. In fact, many places print these dieting options directly in the menu for the health-conscious people. Control your portions by ordering lunch menu sizes or splitting the meal in half and getting a doggie bag, and you'll be well on your way to healthy eating, even away from home.

Yes, eating healthy foods when you travel can be a challenge. However, your health is worth it. When you eat good foods, you will also fight illnesses that you are likely to encounter when traveling and be more alert so that you can enjoy your trip.



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