

Healthy Eating



It is okay to ask for what you want to help you eat healthy.

Eating healthy foods can improve your overall health and may even help prevent disease from occurring. But what does this really mean and how do you go about it?

For starters, you could try to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day and limit the amount of fat and sugar you consume. You'll also want to eat a variety of foods throughout the week, and you'll want to limit portion sizes, too.

Of course, for some people with certain conditions (such as diabetes or food allergies), you'll want to speak with a medical professional about your special dietary needs.

Benefits of healthy eating

Healthy eating will reduce your risk of:

- heart disease and stroke
- high blood pressure and diabetes
- breast, colon, and prostate cancers

Healthy eating will help you:

- avoid weight gain
- have more energy
- feel better now and in the future

Getting started

Making changes can be hard. But when it comes to taking care of yourself, it's worth the effort so you can do the things that you want to do.

When you are ready to make some changes, here is how you can start:

- Make small changes in your eating. Start with one change at a time. Add one serving of fruits or vegetables to any of your meals or as a snack.
- Choose smaller portions of lean red meat (such as tenderloin or bottom round). Try skinless chicken or fish.
- Don't shop for groceries when you are hungry. Make a grocery list to help you buy healthier foods and stay away from junk food.
- Try switching from whole milk to 2 or 1 percent milk or nonfat milk. Limit use of sugars by limiting the amount of soda you drink or switch to sugar-free soda.
- Drink plenty of water. It is good for the body and helps you feel full.
- Try to eat slower. It takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain that it is full.

Ideas to improve how you eat

- Add 1 fruit or vegetable to meals or snacks until you have reached 5 a day. A whole piece of fruit, like a medium sized apple, is 1 serving.
- Fresh is best, but frozen, dried, and canned fruits and vegetables are all good choices. For canned fruits or vegetables, look for labels that say "in light syrup" or "no added salt."



- Eat less fat. Remove all visible fat (or skin from meat or chicken) before cooking. Broil or bake instead of frying.
- Take healthy snacks with you (fruits, vegetables, pretzels) to avoid hunger later in the day.
- Choose high-fiber foods, such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. These help you feel full and most are low-fat.

Remember, be realistic. Make small changes over time in what you eat. Try a small change for one to two weeks then start the next change. That may be easier than changing the way you eat all at once. A drastic change may not be successful in the long run.

How to be successful at making changes

Be adventurous. Include variety in the food you choose. Besides the nutritional benefits, variety adds interest to meals and snacks. Learn new ways to prepare vegetables and low-fat meals. Try new spices and herbs.

Be sensible. Cut down on guilt. You can enjoy all foods without overdoing it. If there is a high-fat, high-calorie snack you want, you can have it. Just have a small portion and eat it less often. If you eat a piece of birthday cake, all is not lost. You can eat lower calorie foods at your next meal.

Keep a food diary. Write down what you eat and how much you eat. Try keeping a food diary for a week or

two. This can help you keep track of your eating patterns.

Be selective when eating out. Look for dishes that are steamed, broiled, baked, grilled, poached or roasted. If you're not sure about a certain dish, ask your server how it's prepared. It is okay to ask for what you want to help you eat healthy. Ask for salad dressings, sauces, and gravies on the side so you can decide how much to use. Ask your server to wrap half of your entrée to take home as it is being served. Most restaurants serve extra-large portions so there is no need to clean your plate.

Ready to change?



On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 means that you are really ready to make necessary changes to your diet), honestly answer the following question:

How ready are you to make changes in your life so that you can eat healthier?

1. If your answer is 3 or less, what would need to happen to make you more ready in the future?
2. If your answer is 4 to 6, what are some of the advantages of staying the same? What are some advantages of changing?
3. If your answer is 7-10, congratulations on your decision to make changes to eat healthier. Your commitment to small changes and healthy choices will help you be successful.



Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.