



Making changes can be hard. But when it comes to taking care of yourself, it's worth the effort.

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

For starters, you could try to eat more 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 limit portion sizes, too.

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

What are the 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 can also help you:

- manage your weight successfully
- have more energy
- feel better now and in the future
- meet your nutritional needs

How can I get started?

Making changes can be hard. But when it comes to taking care of yourself, it's worth the effort. When you are ready to make some changes, here is how you can start:

Make small changes over time

Start with one change at a time. For instance, add one serving of fruits or vegetables to any of your meals. Or try having fruit as a snack. When you have met that goal, choose another small change to work on. Avoid fad diets or big changes in what you eat.

Control your portion sizes and choose leaner meat or fish

Choose smaller portions of lean red meat (such as tenderloin or bottom round). A healthy portion size is about the size of your palm, or of a deck of cards. Try skinless white meats such as turkey or chicken, or add some fish to your diet.

Realize that simple changes add up
Switching from whole milk to lowfat milk (1 or 2 percent), or even nonfat milk, can make a big difference in your daily intake of calories. Try cutting back on sugar by limiting the amount of soda you drink and switching to sugar-free soda. Use small amounts of healthy oils such as olive or canola oil and try lower fat salad dressings. Drink plenty of water—at least 6 to 8 glasses every day—it's good for the body and it helps you feel full. Try to eat more slowly. It takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain that it's full.

Avoid temptation

If it's not in your cupboard, you won't be tempted. Make a grocery list to help you buy healthier foods and stay away from junk food. Substitute lower fat choices (such as popcorn or reduced fat crackers) for foods with lots of fat and sugar. Read labels. Plan your grocery trips so that you don't end up shopping when you are hungry.

How can I improve what I eat?

- Add 1 fruit or vegetable to meals or snacks until you have reached 5 or more a day. A whole 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.

What Does Healthy Eating Mean to You?

- Take healthy snacks with you (fruits, vegetables, pretzels, or lower calorie nutritional bars) 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. Set a small, achievable goal and work on it for 1 to 2 weeks. Once you have reached it, start with another small change. That may work better than changing the way you eat all at once. A drastic change is harder to maintain and may not be successful in the long run.

How can I succeed at making healthy 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. There are many low-fat recipes available on the Internet or in magazines—give them a try!

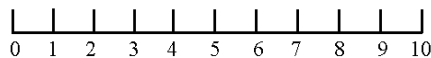
Be sensible. Don't indulge in guilt. You can enjoy all foods without overdoing it. If there is a high-fat, high-calorie snack you want, you can have it. Just have a small portion and eat it less often. If you eat a piece of birthday cake, all is not lost. You can eat lower calorie foods at your next

meal. By keeping healthy food in your kitchen, you'll make it easier to get back on track.

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. For instance, you might notice that stress makes you eat more or crave certain foods. Once you know that, you can make different choices.

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 0 to 10 (where 10 means you are really ready to make necessary changes to your diet), honestly answer the following question:

How ready am I to make changes in my life so I 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 4–6, what are some 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.

Additional Resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and more.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- If you are hit, hurt or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.