

Let's Talk Food

Taking steps toward a healthy lifestyle

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One of the most popular New Year's resolutions is to eat healthier. Many people start strong with their goal, but tend to fade away and go back to their old eating habits. They get bogged down with complex diets and approaches to eating healthy, without first looking at the simple steps they can take towards a healthier diet.

Food is the fuel that powers your body, and if you're putting in bad fuel, it won't run efficiently. But there's simple steps you can take to start eating well that will get your body running smoothly.

■ Make gradual changes to your diet, and don't try to change it overnight. Take small steps, like having a salad every two days or eating your favorite fruit or vegetable once a day. When these small changes become habit, you can continue to

add more healthy foods to your diet.

■ Every healthy change you make, no matter how small, matters. Don't strive for perfection, just strive to be healthier than you were before.

■ Drink enough water. According to the Mayo Clinic, this means 13 cups per day for men, and nine cups per day for women. Water flushes your system of waste products and toxins, and helps fight hunger, which will help you eat in moderation.

■ Eating in moderation means eating less than we do now, as serving sizes have increased in restaurants and at home. Things like ordering a starter instead of an entree, splitting a dish with someone, using smaller plates, and remembering visual cues for portion sizes will all help you eat in moderation.

■ The way you eat is an overlooked part of a healthy diet. Taking time to chew, eating slower, eating smaller meals throughout the day, eating breakfast, avoiding late night

snacks, and ceasing eating before you're full are all healthier ways to eat and will help you see food as nourishment, and not something to gulp down or rush through.

■ Fruits and vegetables are cornerstones of a healthy diet. Think about eating a rainbow of fruits and vegetables, and the more colorful or brighter, the better. Fruits and vegetables contain important vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants your body needs to function at its best, and getting these nutrients from food and not vitamins makes a difference.

■ Healthy carbohydrates and whole grains give you long-lasting energy, and protect against heart disease and diabetes. Healthy carbs are whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables. Bad carbs are foods like white flour, refined sugar and white rice that have been stripped of all bran, fiber, and nutrients.

■ Look for healthy fats, which nourish your brain, heart, and cells, and avoid un-

healthy fats. Monounsaturated fats, found in nuts and seeds, and polyunsaturated fats found in fish and nuts are healthy fats. Saturated fats found in red meat and whole milk dairy products and trans fats in crackers, cookies, candies, fried foods, and processed foods are unhealthy.

■ Protein breaks down into amino acids that promote growth and energy, and help maintain cells, tissues, and organs. Different protein sources like beans, nuts, and soy products will vary your protein intake. Quality sources of protein like fresh fish, chicken, turkey, tofu, and eggs are also good.

■ Calcium keeps your body strong and healthy and is essential to keep bones strong. Good sources of calcium are dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese, vegetables like lettuce, celery, and green beans, and beans, like black beans, pinto beans, and baked beans are good sources of calcium.

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