

5 Easy Ways to Eat Healthier and Lose Weight

All of the time it seems that one of the most discussed topics is nutrition. Many people struggle with trying to follow recommendations for their health. The problem is that statistically many people do not have the habits that they need to be healthy.

Each day you should be getting at least five servings of fruits and vegetables but most adults in the U.S. only eat 1.6 servings of vegetables and 1.1 servings of fruit.

Eating more produce is one easy health goal that you can make for 2015. The following are five simple health goals that will help you to learn how to have the healthy eating habits that you need for your health. Plus you will find that it is easy to lose weight when you are following them.

Of course making these five changes to your lifestyle can be hard, so instead of trying to do them all at once, why not try and focus on one at a time? When this becomes part of your normal routine and does not feel like a change you will know that you are ready to tackle the next one.

Executing the process slowly will help you stick to it through the end of December 2015 and will help you end the year healthier.

1. Choose produce at each meal. Making produce one of the main attractions at each meal is going to have a lot of benefits for your health.

Eating five servings each day of fruits and vegetables is going to do a lot of things for you. It will increase your intake of minerals, fiber, antioxidants and vitamins. This can lower your chances of getting certain types of cancer, having

heart disease, having a stroke, and a number of additional chronic diseases. Since vegetables and fruits help you to avoid foods that have more calories per bite, they are able to help you with weight loss. For instance, one cup of cooked pasta has about 200 calories and one cup of non-starchy vegetables has about 25 calories. You can get rid of anywhere from 50 to 200 calories when you choose a medium pear instead of crackers, cookies or chips.

Tips to make it work: Choosing to eat one serving of fruit at breakfast and snack and two servings of vegetables at lunch and dinner will help you to get the servings that you need. One serving is generally equal to one cup or a piece of fruit that is about the size of a tennis ball. You can add your fruit to things like oatmeal and yogurt, eat it raw, or make it into a smoothie.

2. Drink water above all else. While everyone knows that there are negative side effects to drinking soft drinks, regardless of whether they are diet or regular, most people do not know all of the benefits of choosing to drink more water. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* published a study that showed that people who are getting their recommended amounts of water in their diet are consuming fewer foods that are high-calorie, eating less sugar and getting more fiber.

In addition to keeping the body well hydrated, it is possible that water helps with weight loss by boosting the metabolism and helping to curb the appetite. Another study showed that people who drink around 7 cups of water each day eat about 200 calories less than those who are drinking less than one glass. It was also published in a different study that people who drink 2 cups of water before eating a meal, eat between 75 and 90 fewer calories. Plus, a German study showed that drinking 16 ounces of water can up your calorie burning by 30 percent within 10 minutes and that it can sustain that calorie burning for more than one hour.

Tips to make it work: Choose to drink 16 ounces of water four times a day. If you hate drinking water because of the taste you can add cucumber slices, lemon wedges, fresh mint leaves, lime wedges, organic citrus zest or freshly grated ginger. You can also mash tangerine wedges or berries and throw them into your water.

3. Get starch from whole foods. Today Americans consume an unhealthy amount of grains that are refined. Some of the products that Americans eat that are made with refined grains include rice, white bread versions, pretzels, pasta, baked goods, cereals and crackers. In the U.S., the average daily intake of healthy whole grains is less than one serving. Healthy grains are foods like brown rice, quinoa and whole wheat. People who eat more whole grains have a lower chance of suffering from obesity, cancer, heart disease, diabetes or stroke, according to research. One reason for the lower risk in obesity is that whole grains are more filling. Fiber actually helps to keep food around in the stomach for longer and makes you feel full longer. It also regulates blood sugar and insulin, which are known to regulate appetites and helps delay how long it takes for you to be hungry again.

One great thing that you can do for your health is to try and replace refined grains with 100 percent-whole grains. Refined grains are grains that have their natural nutrients and fiber removed. There are many great gluten free varieties of whole grains for those who are trying to limit their consumption of gluten products. There are also a lot of starches that are rich in nutrients and are not grains. These include squash, beans, root vegetables, lentils and potatoes that have their skins on them. If you are going to try and lose weight it might be tempting to go carbohydrate-free, but instead you should be eating moderate portions. This is because whole grains are known to help provide you with nutrients and sustained energy that can help you to lose weight.

Tips to make it work: With each meal you should eat just one

or two servings of starch that comes from whole foods. If you are more active, you should aim for two servings at each meal. If you are less active you should aim for one serving at each meal. There are some great choices for you with puffed whole grain cereals or oats at breakfast, chickpeas or quinoa in a salad at lunch, and squash, lentils, sweet potato or wild rice at dinner. A serving of cooked starch is just $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. It is important to follow this guideline instead of looking on the label of the package.

4. Reduce your sugar intake. Many times people try to cut sugar out all together but this does not work as well as offering themselves sugar in moderation. Each day the average American consumes about 22 teaspoons of processed sugar. This means that they are eating this much sugar in addition to the sugar that they get from natural sources like fruits. The American Heart Association says that women should consume no more than 6 teaspoons and men should consume no more than 9 teaspoons of processed sugar each day. This includes sugars found in both beverages and foods. While this might seem strict, it is important to remember that it does not remove all sugar from your diet. If you need to have sugar then allowing yourself to have a little each day will help you stay on track and keep you from bingeing on sugar later.

Tips to make it work: The first thing that you can do is stop eating processed sugar. This means that you will not be eating packaged treats, yogurts, almond milk (that is not unsweetened) or candy. You should also realize that there are many places where the sugar could be found like in salad dressing and tomato sauce. Try finding unsweetened versions of your favorite foods or make homemade versions that do not have sugar in them. If you want salad dressing, you can simply whisk together dijon mustard, extra virgin olive oil, minced garlic, balsamic vinegar and an Italian herb seasoning. Once you have taken sugar out of your diet, you will be able to find the small things that you would like to splurge on each

day.

There are healthier splurges that will help keep you on track with your diet. Dark chocolate (70 percent cocoa or greater) can be eaten in small servings each day or one or two times a week. You should pre-plan the splurges that you are going to have so that you are able to stay on your healthy eating plan. Choosing to split a dessert or buying just one cookie can help you not to overdo it on the sugar intake. Some people do not need to eat sweets, and that is great. Many people even find that the more that they avoid sugar, the less that they want to eat it. However, when there is something special going on or you have a sugar craving it is OK to eat a small amount of sugar. People who have optimal health and are able to keep excess weight off long term find a great balance with eating sugar that works for them.

5. Be aware of what you are eating. One of the best things that you can do for your health in 2015 is make sure that you are aware of what you are eating. This means that you will be focused on the cues that your body has for you when you are full or hungry, you will eat slower, and identify when you are eating because of emotions, habits or just being bored. Doing this and learning to listen to your body is a great way to really help lose weight and keep it off. Listening to the signals that your body gives you is a great way to keep you healthy and keep your weight in check. When you learn to slow down your eating, you will be more satisfied and will end up eating less.

The University of Rhode Island found in a study that people who eat faster actually eat more than 3 ounces of food per minute compared with 2 ounces for slow eaters and 2.5 ounces for medium speed eaters. Becoming more mindful of what you are doing can also help you to realize when you are looking for food but not actually hungry. This helps because you can address these issues in ways other than eating food.

Tips to make it work: One of the best things that you can do is make sure that you are being mindful. This can be done by starting a journal of the food that you eat, how much you are eating, if you are hungry before, how full you get, and even writing down how you are feeling at the time of eating.

It is also important that you are not doing anything but eating when you are eating at least one time each day. Take a break in between each bite, focus on the texture and flavor of your food, listen to your body and stop eating when you feel full. This means that you might not clean your plate, but you will be healthier, so who cares?

While it can feel odd to slow down and eat by yourself this can be something that will help you to learn to catch yourself if you are eating too fast. It can also help you to have a new eating pattern where you eat slower and will allow you to focus more on what you are eating and taking breaks. This will lead to a healthier and happier you in the future.

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