

Healthy Eating: Starting a Plan for Change

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Overview

When you're ready to make some changes to your eating habits, having a plan for how you'll get started can help you succeed. Healthy eating is about balance, variety, and moderation. It means that you eat enough, but not too much, and that you eat a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to stay healthy.

Key steps in making a plan include:

- Having your own reason for changing your habits.
- Setting goals you can reach.
- Tracking your progress.
- Preparing for things that might get in your way.

Keep in mind that you don't have to make big changes all at once. You can start by adding one healthy food to one of your daily meals. Small changes add up over time.

How do you make a healthy eating plan?

These steps can help you make a plan for healthy eating that works for you.

1. Have your own reason.
Your reason for healthy eating is really important. You are more likely to succeed if you do it because you want to, not because someone else wants you to.

What makes you want to change how you eat? Writing down your reasons will be a good reminder later if you get discouraged.

2. Set goals you can reach.
 - **Long-term goals** are goals that you want to reach in 6 to 12 months.
 - **Short-term goals** are the steps that will help you reach your long-term goal. Short-term goals are things that you want to do tomorrow and the day after.

Here are some examples:

- A long-term goal might be to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Your first small goal might be to eat 1 serving of fruit at breakfast each day this week.
- When you reach that goal, you can set a new one by adding a serving of fruit or vegetables to your lunch or dinner. Or you could eat a piece of fruit as a snack each day.

Write down your goals, and put them where you can see them. This will remind you of what you're trying to do.

3. Keep track of your progress.

Tracking your progress helps you see how far you've come. You could use a notebook or journal, a calendar, or an app on your smartphone to keep track of your eating. Look this over if you start to doubt yourself or feel discouraged. It can help motivate you to do more. And it can help encourage you if you get off track.

Each time you meet a goal, reward yourself. Watch a movie, borrow a book from the library, or do something else you enjoy.

4. Prepare for slip-ups.

It's normal to try to change a habit, do fine for a while, and then have a slip-up. Take time to think about what things could get in the way of your success. These things are called barriers.

What are the things that might cause a slip-up for you? If you've tried to make lifestyle changes before, think about what helped you and what got in your way.

By thinking about these barriers now, you'll be better prepared to deal with them if they happen. It might help to make a list of your barriers and your plans to get past those barriers.

5. Get support.

The more support you have, the easier it will be to change your eating habits. It can help to:

- **Get a partner.** It may motivate you to know that your partner is doing the same thing and may be counting on you to help them succeed. That person can also remind you how far you've come.
- **Get friends and family involved.** Don't be afraid to tell them that their encouragement makes a big difference to you.
- **Give yourself positive reinforcement.** When you feel like giving up, don't waste energy feeling bad about yourself. Remember your reason for wanting to change, think about the progress you've made, and keep moving forward.

Related Information

- [Developing a Plan for Healthy Eating](#)
- [Healthy Eating](#)
- [Healthy Eating: Getting Support When Changing Your Eating Habits](#)
- [Healthy Eating: Overcoming Barriers to Change](#)
- [Healthy Eating: Staying With Your Plan](#)
- [Staying With Your Eating Plan When Your Schedule Shifts](#)
- [Tips for Easier Healthy Eating](#)

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