

March is National Nutrition Month



Cookies as big as frisbees. Muffins the size of flower pots. Bowls of pasta so deep, your fork can barely find the bottom. One reason people's waistlines have expanded over the past few decades is because food portions have too.

People today eat way more than they used to — and way more than they need to. This means that they're constantly taking in more calories than their bodies can burn. Unfortunately, lots of us don't realize that we're eating too much because we've become so used to seeing (and eating!) large portions.

Portion sizes began to increase in the 1980s and have been ballooning ever since. Take bagels, for example: 20 years ago, the average bagel had a 3-inch diameter and 140 calories. Today, bagels have a 6-inch diameter and 350 calories. One bagel that size actually contains half a person's recommended number of grain servings *for an entire day!*

Eat right for a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight contributes to overall health and well-being. The following tips are for adults who want to make changes in their lifestyle and move toward a healthier weight.

Start with a Plan

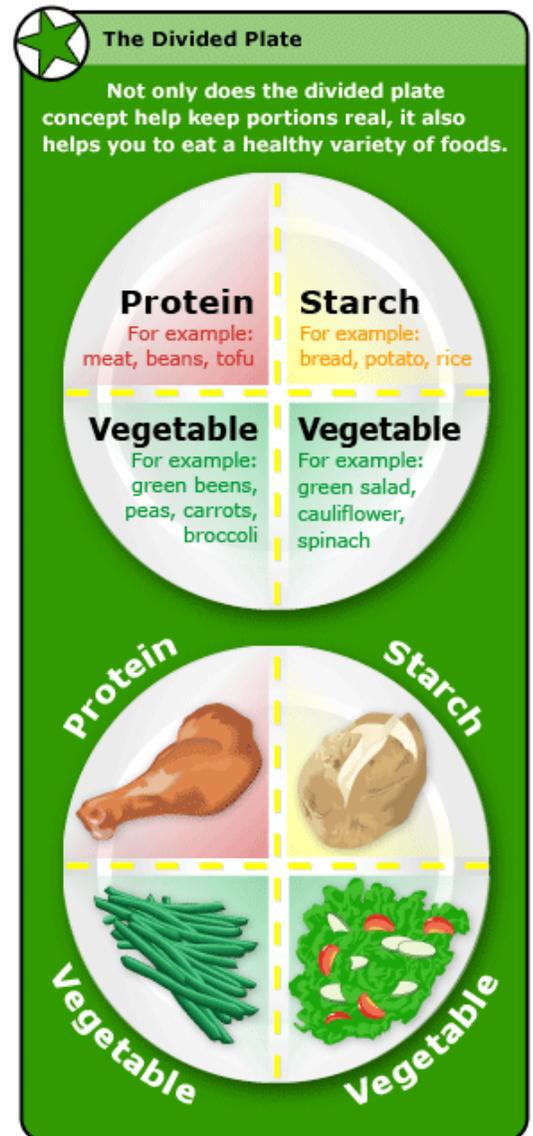
Develop a plan for lifelong health, not just short-term weight loss. Don't lose sight of the big picture: achieving overall good health. By putting more emphasis on your health, experts agree that you can raise your overall self-esteem, resulting in healthy eating, weight loss and improved health.

Set realistic, healthy goals. When you make changes step-by-step and set realistic goals, you are more likely to succeed in reaching them. Start with two or three specific, small changes at a time. Track your progress by keeping a good and activity log. When you've turned a healthy change into a habit, reward yourself with a fun activity.

Healthy Eating Tips

Eat at least 3 meals a day and plan your meals ahead of time. Whether you're eating at home, packing a lunch or eating out, an overall eating plan for the day will help keep you on track.

Balance your plate with the right portions of a variety of foods. Half your plate should be filled with vegetables, one fourth with lean meat, poultry or fish and one fourth



with grains. To round out your meal, add a glass of fat-free or low-fat milk and a serving of fruit for dessert.

Try changing from a large dinner plate to a smaller one. It may help you feel satisfied with reduced portions.

Start your meal with low calorie foods like fruits, vegetables and salads. Then move on to the main course and side dishes.

Focus on your food. Pick one place to sit down and eat at home. Eating unconsciously while doing other things, like watching TV, may lead to eating more than you think.

Know when you've had enough to eat. Quit before you feel full or stuffed. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your body is getting food. When your brain gets this message, you stop feeling hungry. So, if you're a fast eater, SLOW DOWN and give your brain a chance to catch up to your stomach!

Get plenty of fiber from fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains. Fiber can help you feel full longer and lower your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Become portion savvy. Keeping tabs on your portion sizes helps you manage your calorie intake – a must in any effective weight management strategy.

Snack smart. Choose snacks by the calories and nutrients they provide. Include snacks as part of your daily calorie allowance and limit portions to one serving. Plan for nutritious snacks to prevent between-meal hunger. Keep portable, healthy snacks in your desk, backpack, or car.



Physical Activity

Find your balance between food and physical activity. Becoming a healthier you isn't just about eating healthy—it's also about physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness. It also helps you control body weight by balancing the calories you take in as food with the calories you expend each day.

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Increasing the intensity or the amount of time that you are physically active can have even greater health benefits and may be needed to control body weight. About 60 minutes a day may be needed to prevent weight gain.
- Children and teenagers should be physically active for 60 minutes every day, or most every day.



Consider this: If you eat 100 more food calories a day than you burn, you'll gain about 1 pound in a month. That's about 10 pounds in a year. The bottom line is that to lose weight, it's important to reduce calories and increase physical activity.

Sources:

American Dietetic Association, "Eating Right for a Healthy Weight", available online at

<http://www.eatright.org/NNM/content.aspx?id=5342>

http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/dieting/portion_size.html#