The Harvard Medical School

6-Week Plan for Healthy Eating

In this report:

- Week-by-week action plan
- Setting goals for success
- Easy fixes for healthier eating
- Smart supermarket choices
- Weight control tips
- 14 delicious recipes

Price: $29

This Harvard Health Publication was prepared exclusively for Coulson Judith - Purchased at https://www.health.harvard.edu
Copyright Notice

This report is copyrighted by Harvard University and is protected by U.S. and international copyright. All rights reserved.

Here’s what you CAN do

- Print out one copy and route this “original” to family.
- You are permitted to have one copy of this publication on your computer at any time (you can’t put it on a network unless you purchased a license to do so). If you have paid for more copies, then you may have that many copies on computers at any time.
- Copy, on an occasional basis, a couple of pages to give to friends, family members, or colleagues.
- We are registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). You can comply with the copyright laws by paying a royalty on copies you make of passages. But not even the CCC can authorize cover-to-cover photocopying or wholesale electronic forwarding.
- If you want to distribute copies of this publication, either in print or electronic form, to others on a regular basis, ask us about bulk discounts or licensing opportunities. You may be able to negotiate an agreement, for a single fee, that would enable you to legally distribute photocopies or electronic copies to others.

Here’s what you CAN’T do (without prior permission)

- Make or forward email copies of an entire publication. The law provides for a very limited amount of copying, commonly referred to as “fair use.” However, cover-to-cover photocopying is forbidden.
- Electronic transmission of a copyrighted work is the legal equivalent of photocopying it (and so is posting it on the Internet or in an electronic database), and is therefore not allowed.
- Routinely copy and distribute portions.
- Republish or repackage the contents.

Some publishers must resort to lawsuits to protect their publications. Harvard Health Publications would like to eliminate the need for such suits by helping to educate customers. We hope this outline has helped explain what is legal and what is not.

For more information

Copyright Clearance Center (CCC)
Ph: 508-750-8400
www.copyright.com

Permissions Requests
Natalie Ramm, Harvard Health Publications
Ph: 617.432.2876
natalie_ramm@hms.harvard.edu

Licensing, Bulk, and Corporate Sales
Tonya Phillips, Belvoir Media Group
Ph: 203-857-3148
tphillips@belvoir.com

Harvard Health Publications
Harvard Medical School
10 Shattuck Street, 2nd Floor
Boston, MA 02115-6011
www.health.harvard.edu
Contents

What makes a diet “healthful”? .......................... 2
Practical steps for a healthful diet ......................... 2
Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate .......................... 3
Dietary Guidelines for Americans ......................... 4
Beyond food: Weight control for health ................. 6
How much to eat? .................................. 8

Getting started on the six-week plan ................... 9
Creating your food diary ................................ 9
Shopping smarts .................................... 13
Becoming label-savvy .................................. 13
Make a clean start .................................. 15
Begin by setting goals ................................ 15

Boost your health at breakfast .......................... 18
The healthy breakfast plate ............................. 18
Setting goals for breakfast success ..................... 19
Fresh starts ........................................ 19
Make a morning exercise appointment ................. 20
Curb coffee-drink calories ............................ 20

A healthy break for lunch ............................... 22
The healthy lunch plate ................................ 22
Setting goals for lunch success ......................... 22
What’s for lunch? .................................... 23
Lunchtime strategies .................................. 24

A dinner makeover ..................................... 27
The healthy dinner plate ................................ 27
Setting goals for dinner success ......................... 27
Sneaky ways to get in more fruits and vegetables .... 28
Upgrade your prepared entrées .......................... 29
Outwit your appetite at home ............................ 29
Outwit your appetite at restaurants .................... 31
Outwit your appetite at parties ........................ 32

Sensible snacking ..................................... 34
Setting goals for snacking success ...................... 34
Smarter snacks ...................................... 36

Keep it going ....................................... 39
The big picture ...................................... 39
Keep up the good work ................................ 40

Cooking kickoff: Recipes for success ................ 42

Resources ......................................... 49

Glossary ............................................. 49
Dear Reader,

Every day, you make dozens of decisions about what to eat. Will you cook at home or eat out? Will you grab a pastry to satisfy a craving? Will you take a second helping or pass? In the moment, each decision seems small, but together they add up to a lifestyle. Research shows that the choices you make—including the foods you eat—profoundly influence your health and longevity.

Putting smart choices into practice day in and day out is really the backbone of nutrition.

Our environment shapes our decisions, often without our conscious awareness. Foods that aren’t healthful beckon us from restaurants, grocery stores, vending machines, coffee shops, and food stands. Often the foods that are least healthful are the most accessible, affordable, and easy. With our environment working against us, it takes active planning and effort to make healthful choices.

The proportion of money spent on food eaten outside of the home rose from 26% in 1970 to 41% in 2010. That’s not a good thing, because if you don’t prepare your own food, you don’t control what you eat. Eating out typically means eating more calories, saturated fat, alcohol, added sugars, and sodium, and fewer fruits and vegetables. After all, the primary interest of food manufacturers is selling food, not keeping you healthy.

However, here’s the good news: making healthful choices is getting easier because research is providing better information about what constitutes a healthful diet.

This report translates the latest nutrition science into practical steps. It will help you analyze your diet and establish goals for healthful meals and snacks. You’ll also create a week-by-week plan that incorporates practical changes to help you make your goals a reality. In addition to these tools, we’ll equip you with healthful recipes to have in your arsenal. Overall, you’ll learn that it doesn’t take a lot of work to assemble healthful meals and snacks. It does take a little planning—and that can go a long way on the road to healthier eating.

The goal is to counteract the unhealthy food environment and to make it easier for you to create a new eating pattern that will lower your risk of life-threatening diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some forms of cancer.

Enjoy the journey!

Teresa Fung, Sc.D., R.D., L.D.N.
Faculty Editor

Kathy McManus, M.S., R.D., L.D.N.
Nutrition Editor
What makes a diet “healthful”?

Judging by news headlines, you’d think that views on good nutrition were changing all the time and are hotly contested. In reality, though, while superfoods and fad diets grab our attention, decades of research on nutrition have created a fairly consistent picture. A good diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, paired with healthy sources of protein and fats. It emphasizes plant-based foods with protein from fish, skinless poultry, nuts, legumes, and small amounts of lean meats. Look for nonfat dairy products. Certain foods, like lean, fresh red meat, should be eaten sparingly, and processed or cured meats like ham, hot dogs, and corned beef are not on the healthy eating menu. Fat can be eaten in moderation, so long as it is mainly from vegetable oils.

Food manufacturers love to boast on their packaging that their foods are fortified with vitamins, but nutrition experts agree that foods that aren’t processed and packaged are best for health. That’s because other nutrients and fiber are removed during processing. Foods reformulated in factories can’t begin to replicate the complex nutrient content of natural foods. Processed foods also come with unwelcome extras: added salt, sugar, and fat. Ideally, most of your foods should be in forms that are as close as possible to the way they came from nature. Whole plant foods have their natural fiber and nutrients intact. Eating a whole apple is much better than drinking apple juice or eating processed fruit snacks made with apples. Whole-grain bread trumps white bread, which is made from flour that is stripped of the nutrient- and fiber-rich outer casing of the wheat berry.

Another part of a healthful diet is how much you eat. Watching your portion sizes and exercising regularly to avoid unhealthy weight gain keeps you strong and healthy. Good nutrition, physical activity, and weight control are three of the most powerful things you can do to reduce your overall risk of major diseases, from cancer and diabetes to heart disease and osteoporosis.

Practical steps for a healthful diet

Healthy eating boils down to this: eat more plant-based foods, fewer animal-based foods, and only as much food as your body needs. Here are some ways to do this:

**Eat more unprocessed or minimally processed foods.**

By doing so, you’ll naturally consume foods that have the amounts and combinations of fiber and nutrients that nature intended. Many factory-made foods, in contrast, are stripped of natural fiber and nutrients and filled with ingredients made to stimulate appetite and keep you eating more. Processed meats, in particular, are linked with heart disease and cancer. Unprocessed foods have no added sugar, fat, or salt. Most also have more fiber.

**Go for novelty.**

You may feel as if good nutrition is boring because you only think of a few kinds of healthful foods. To get a broader range of disease-fighting nutrients, try new grains, vegetables, and fruits. Bulgur and quinoa are good grain alternatives. Novel kinds of beans, fruits, and vegetables abound. You can experiment with new recipes (see “Cooking kickoff: Recipes for success,” page 42) that rely less on meat and make use of different ingredients and herbs and spices for flavor sources.

**Cover all your bases.**

Every day, strive to eat three servings of fruit, three to four servings of vegetables, some lean protein, some whole grains, healthy oils, some nonfat or low-fat dairy, and a serving of nuts or legumes. At each meal, look at your plate: about one-half should be fruits and vegetables, one-quarter lean proteins (fish, poultry, beans, or tofu), and one-quarter whole grains.
Stay hydrated.

Because many foods contain water, most people get sufficient liquid each day without making a special effort. That said, it can be helpful throughout the day to drink water or another no-calorie liquid as an alternative to snacking or to wash down meals. Plus, as you increase your fiber content with whole-grain foods, water helps ferry it smoothly through your digestive tract and protects you from constipation. Drinking 4 to 6 cups of water a day—or water in combination with other low-calorie liquids—is a reasonable and healthful goal.

Keep protein portions small.

For proteins like meat and chicken, 3 ounces for lunch and slightly more for dinner is a good goal. Keep in mind that 4 ounces of meat is about the size of a deck of cards. For beans, the serving size is about ¼ cup of cooked beans, which looks like the size of a golf ball. (For more on lunch and dinner, see “Week 3: A healthy break for lunch,” page 22, and “Week 4: A dinner makeover,” page 27).

Aim for at least two servings of fish each week.

Fish—especially salmon, bluefish, and mackerel—are good sources of omega-3 fats, which are good for your heart. You’ll want to skip the large, predatory deep ocean fish (such as swordfish, shark, king mackerel, and bluefin tuna) because of their higher mercury content.

Avoid impulse eating.

If you snack, plan ahead for healthy snacks. Avoid sugary drinks and their empty calories. See “Week 5: Sensible snacking, page 34.”

Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate

Twenty years ago, the USDA created its Food Guide Pyramid, a symbol that became widely used in schools, health settings, and the media. It was meant to convey in a simple illustration everything that was needed to build a healthful diet. However, its proportions were not always based on up-to-date scientific evidence, so faculty members at the Harvard School of Public Health created the Healthy Eating Pyramid as a healthier alternative based on a wealth of nutrition research. In 2005, the USDA created a new pyramid, called MyPyramid, which received widespread criticism for being vague and confusing. As a result, in 2011 the USDA introduced a totally new icon called MyPlate. The plate image is more intuitive (the pyramid was easy to misinterpret; some people thought the top foods were most important, rather than the other way around). It emphasizes fruits and vegetables, which is great, but it’s simplistic and falls short in providing information about healthful food choices.

Here in Figure 1, page 4, we offer a better alternative from Harvard experts: the Healthy Eating Plate. It fixes some of the major problems of the USDA plate by providing more detailed advice with recommendations based on science.

You can use the plate in two ways. Like the Healthy Eating Pyramid, it helps you understand how to make healthful food choices. You can also use it as a blueprint for a given meal, a guide to apportioning foods on your own plate. As we look at revamping individual meals in this report, you’ll see examples of how to do this. Of course, not every meal will look like the Healthy Eating Plate (most of us don’t eat vegetables at breakfast), but your meals over the course of the day can add up to this. Here’s what’s on the plate:

- Fully half of the plate contains fruits and vegetables. Most Americans don’t get enough vegetables, so the more you can add the better, and aim for a variety of colors and types. Potatoes and french fries don’t count as vegetables.
- A quarter of the plate is whole grains—not just any grain, as in the USDA version. Choosing whole grains over refined grains can help curb appetite, lower risk of diabetes, and lower bad cholesterol levels.
- The final quarter is healthful sources of protein like fish, beans, nuts, seeds, poultry, and eggs. High-fat meats and processed meats don’t appear here.
- The bottle on the left side is a reminder to use healthy oils, like olive and canola, in cooking, on salads, and at the table. Limit butter, and avoid unhealthy trans fatty acid.
- The glass on the right side is a reminder to drink
The Harvard Medical School 6-Week Plan for Healthy Eating

www.health.harvard.edu

People who eat according to these guidelines (whether you prefer to follow the Healthy Eating Pyramid or Plate) reduce their risk of several diseases that can shorten life and diminish quality of life. Research following the diets of more than 100,000 health professionals found, for example, that men whose diets most closely followed these guidelines lowered their overall risk of major diseases by 20% over 8 to 12 years, compared with men whose diets scored lowest on the healthy eating recommendations. Women in the study who followed the Healthy Eating guidelines lowered their overall risk by 11% compared with those who scored lowest. The big wins came with cardiovascular disease. Both men and women who most closely followed the recommendations cut their risk of heart disease by one-third or more, and even people who were taking medications for high cholesterol or high blood pressure benefitted.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The U.S. government provides nutrition guidance for Americans, which are updated every five years. The most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans were created in 2010 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They were created by a committee of scientists who analyzed reams of nutritional research, debated important questions, and ultimately made recommendations to the government. As such, they are more research-based than the USDA food guide. They distill the latest nutritional research into practical advice.

Figure 1  Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate
The guidelines can be boiled down to two main messages: maintain a healthy weight and eat mainly foods that naturally contain lots of vitamins and minerals. We all know that staying slim and avoiding junk food is good, but following that advice is harder than it might sound. As you read, remember that “solid fats” refers mainly to animal fat and trans fat. “Added sugars” means foods with lots of sugar added to them, like sodas, sugary cereals, candy, and other sweets. Here are some of the important take-home messages from the guidelines, separated into logical categories.

Balancing calories to manage weight
- Prevent or reduce the number of people who are overweight or obese by eating fewer calories, and healthier foods, and increasing physical activity.
- For people at a healthy weight, control total calorie intake to maintain body weight. For people who are already overweight or obese, this means consuming fewer calories from foods and beverages.
- Increase physical activity and reduce time spent in sedentary behaviors.
- Adjust how many calories you take in as you go through different stages of life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and older age.

Foods and food components to reduce
- There’s a growing realization that excess sodium can harm health. Reduce daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) or even further to 1,500 mg among people who are age 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. The 1,500 mg recommendation applies to about half of the U.S. population, including children and the majority of adults.
- Consume less than 10% of calories from saturated fatty acids (mainly from animal fat) by replacing them with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids (mainly from vegetable oils).
- Consume less than 300 mg per day of dietary cholesterol (mainly found in animal-based foods).
- Keep trans fat consumption as low as possible by limiting foods that contain synthetic sources of trans fats, such as partially hydrogenated oils, and by limiting other solid fats.
- Reduce the intake of calories from solid fats (mainly animal fat) and added sugars.
- Limit the consumption of foods that contain refined grains (such as white flour and white rice), especially refined-grain foods that contain solid fats, added sugars, and sodium.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation—up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. No one under the legal drinking age should drink alcohol.

Foods and nutrients to increase
Try to meet the following recommendations as part of a healthy eating pattern while staying within your calorie needs.
- Increase vegetable and fruit intake.
- Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark green, red, and orange vegetables, and beans and peas.
- Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains. Increase whole-grain intake by replacing refined grains with whole grains.
- Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, or fortified soy beverages.
- Choose a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Increase the amount and variety of seafood by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.
- Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.
- Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, and calcium, which are nutrients Americans may not get enough of. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk and milk products.

Building healthy eating patterns
- Select an eating pattern that meets nutrient needs over time and allows you to consume an appropriate level of calories.
- Account for all foods and beverages consumed and assess how they fit within a total healthy eating pattern.
Beyond food: Weight control for health

Although many people are interested in weight loss to look better, weight control is an intrinsic part of good health. The obesity epidemic in the United States has hit full stride, and with it comes significant health risks. There’s no such thing as a “healthful food” if it causes you to gain weight. Certain healthful foods, such as most fresh vegetables and fruits, can be eaten without much concern for weight gain. Other healthful foods, like nuts, lean meats, low-fat cheese, whole-grain bread, pasta, or rice, and a few vegetables like avocados and coconuts, have enough calories to pose a risk of weight gain if eaten without restraint.

With that in mind, here are some tools to help you incorporate weight control into your plan.

Size up your waist.
How much belly fat is too much? A waist circumference of 35 inches (for women) or 40 inches (for men) or larger is generally considered a sign of excess visceral fat (fat that collects in the abdomen around your organs, which raises your risk of chronic disease), but that may not apply if your overall body size is large. Rather than focus on a single reading or absolute cut-off, keep an eye on whether your waist is growing over time (are your pants getting snug at the waist?). That should give you a good idea of whether you’re gaining unhealthy visceral fat. See Figure 2, below, for an illustration on how to measure your waist correctly.

What’s your BMI?
Body mass index (BMI) is a widely used method of defining a healthy weight based on height. BMI is not a perfect measure, since it doesn’t tell you how much of your weight is fat, but using waist size and BMI together can help most people gauge whether they need to work on reducing fat or not. To find your BMI, use the table on page 7.

A BMI of 30 or more represents obesity. In general, this means your body weight is 35% to 40% more than your ideal body weight. If you’re at a healthy BMI now and your waist size is fine, keep close tabs on your weight. If it starts to creep up (5 pounds is...
a red flag), take steps to avoid gaining more weight, or lose some weight by concentrating on eating foods that are low in calories, such as whole-grain breads and cereals as well as fruits and vegetables. These foods are bulky but low in fat, so they help you feel fuller with fewer calories. Remember that drinks are a major source of calories that many people overlook. Research cites sugary, calorie-laden beverages, such as non-diet sodas and juice-flavored drinks, as a major contributor to weight gain.

**Fitness for health**

Combining a healthful diet with regular physical activity will help keep you resilient and healthy. For general health and to prevent many diseases, experts recommend at least two-and-a-half hours a week of moderate-inten-

---

### Table 1 What’s my BMI?

Health care providers use body mass index (BMI), an approximate measure of body fat based on a person’s height and weight, to determine whether a person’s weight falls within a healthy range. To determine your BMI, use the Web-based calculator at nhlbi.support.com/bmi or simply look it up below.

The BMI range associated with the lowest rate of illness and death is approximately 19 to 24 in men and 18 to 24 in women, so people with BMIs in this healthiest range are considered to be of normal weight. Higher BMIs are associated with progressively higher rates of illness and death. People with BMIs of 25 to 29 are considered overweight, and those with BMIs of 30 or higher are considered obese. Obesity has been further subdivided into class 1 (BMI of 30–34), class 2 (35–40), and class 3 (40 and above). Class 3 obesity is roughly equivalent to being 80 pounds overweight if you are a woman or 100 pounds if you are a man.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEIGHT</th>
<th>BODY WEIGHT IN POUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BMI</strong></td>
<td><strong>19–24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NORMAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>OVERWEIGHT</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Harvard Health Publication was prepared exclusively for Coulson Judith - Purchased at https://www.health.harvard.edu
You can break this up into chunks as brief as ten minutes. This might be brisk walking, yard work, doubles tennis, or active housework. Or, if you choose to do more intensive vigorous activity such as running, one hour and 15 minutes per week will provide health benefits. For additional health benefits or weight loss, strive for five hours of moderate activity or two-and-a-half hours of vigorous activity per week. Add strength training and stretching a couple of days a week to the mix as well. These help maintain muscle mass, bones, strength, and flexibility. Physical activity also lowers blood sugar levels, because muscles need the glucose in the blood for fuel. Regular exercise can train muscles to respond better to insulin, the hormone that signals the body to take in glucose from the blood. Maintaining healthy blood sugar levels can reduce your risk of diabetes.

Regular exercise is also a proven treatment for high blood pressure, and moderate-intensity training (such as walking) seems to be at least as good for blood pressure as high-intensity exercises like running. To whittle your middle and build muscle, use weight-bearing exercise and curb calorie consumption. At midlife, you may find that you have to eat less and exercise more just to stay in the same shape.

**How much to eat?**

Many of us are eating too much: the USDA estimates that Americans consume an average of 200 calories more per day than they did in the 1970s. Consider how much food you need to maintain your current weight if you are not overweight, or to gradually lose weight if you are overweight. This healthy eating plan is not intended to be a weight-loss diet, but rather a way to break old unhealthful eating habits and embark on a new way of eating that will optimize your health over the long term. Weight control is part of this equation. Every individual is different, and caloric needs differ depending on many factors, including age, activity level, and metabolic needs. Most women need between 1,600 and 2,000 calories per day, while most men require 2,000 to 2,400 calories per day to maintain their weight. If you are particularly active, you may need to take in more calories. If you are inactive or want to lose weight, you may choose to reduce the calories, but don’t go too low. To eat enough nutritious foods to maintain your health, women should consume at least 1,200 calories a day and men 1,500, unless dieting under the supervision of a health professional.
Perhaps in the past, you started with the best intentions to eat right but got derailed. Maybe you couldn't resist a sweet, high-calorie snack in the afternoon, or you turned to processed foods for dinner too often because it was easy. To turn good intentions into reality, you must anticipate these obstacles. In this first week of your six-week healthy eating journey, we'll work on developing awareness of what you're consuming, assessing the diet changes you need to make, and setting goals for yourself.

Creating your food diary
Your first step is to create a food diary. It's one of the most effective tools to help you analyze your current eating patterns and develop a more healthful eating plan for the future.

How a food diary can help
One of the reasons change is difficult is that our habits are ingrained—we don't even think about them. To make change happen, we have to become aware of our behavior. A food diary will put your eating habits in black and white. It will help you truly see where your calories and other nutrients are coming from—and discover your areas of strength and weakess.

Are you getting enough fruits and vegetables? Not enough fiber? Eating too many sugary desserts or processed foods? Downing too much soda and not enough water? Are you eating the same meals day after day? Find out by putting pen to paper. A food diary forces you to write down and really think about your food selections. It also reveals sneaky sources of unhealthy foods and calories. After all, if you don't write down what you eat, it's easy to forget that cheese-filled croissant you snacked on while shopping.

A food diary can also help you pinpoint problem eating patterns. Are you getting most of your calories in one sitting instead of spreading them out through-out the day? Do you skip breakfast, and then ambush the vending machine at 11 a.m.? Do your eating habits change on weekends? Are you eating out more often than you think? Do you mindlessly munch on junk food when you watch TV? You may not be aware how many unhealthy, high-calorie foods you are consuming at odd moments if you don't track your habits with a diary. Seeing it all in black and white can help you take responsibility for changing your behavior.

If you're trying to lose weight, consider this: a study of 1,685 participants in the Weight Loss Maintenance trial program at Kaiser Permanente in Portland, Ore., showed that dieters who kept a food diary more than five days a week lost almost twice as much weight in a six-month period as those who didn't. A diary can also help you become accountable in several other ways: you can include your daily exercise in your diary and also monitor your mealtime moods to see if emotions are pushing you to overeat or consume the wrong foods.

Armed with information from your diary, you can determine your own personal policies for healthy eating and weight control, rather than looking in panic to some arbitrary “diet” every time you feel your health is steering off course. With information comes strength. Now if you lapse from your intentions, you can simply return to your tried-and-true personal plan of smart eating and exercise. (For more on food policies, see “Week 6: Keep it going,” page 39).

Diary dos and don'ts
The sample food diary on page 10 is one way to record a detailed breakdown of your diet. You can also find online food sites that enable you to keep a diary, or, if you use a mobile device, there are applications available for the same purpose (see “Quick tip: Enlist technology,” page 12).

To begin, keep your food diary for two weekdays and one weekend day. That’s all you need to get the big picture. Before you get started, though, make sev-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>WITH WHOM</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MOOD</th>
<th>HUNGER</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>FRUITS OR VEGETABLES</th>
<th>FULLNESS</th>
<th>FILLED OUT JUST BEFORE OR AFTER EATING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30–8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Watching TV</td>
<td>Rushed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5 cups</td>
<td>Shredded wheat cereal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 medium Banana</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 teaspoons Sugar</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00–10:10 a.m.</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 medium</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00–11:05 a.m.</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>Rushed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Granola bar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30–2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 large slices</td>
<td>Cheese pizza</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 large Chocolate chip cookie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00–6:10 p.m.</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 pieces</td>
<td>Low-fat string cheese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30–7:05 p.m.</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>Baked chicken</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup Brown rice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup Broccoli</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 glasses Iced tea</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30–9:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Watching TV</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>Frozen yogurt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:** 3
## YOUR FOOD DIARY

Print 3 copies of this page and track your eating patterns for three days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>WITH WHOM</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MOOD</th>
<th>HUNGER</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>FOOD</th>
<th>FRUITS OR VEGETABLES</th>
<th>FULLNESS</th>
<th>FILLED OUT JUST BEFORE OR AFTER EATING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(record start and end time of meal or snack)</td>
<td>(kitchen, living room, bedroom, car, desk at work)</td>
<td>(reading, watching TV, talking, cooking)</td>
<td>(neutral, happy, tense, depressed, angry, bored, rushed, tired)</td>
<td>(rate from 0~5, 0=no hunger, 5=starving)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(number of servings)</td>
<td>(after eating: 1=still hungry 2=quite satisfied 3=uncomfortable)</td>
<td>(X=yes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Date:** __________
eral copies of the blank food diary (see page 11) or print out copies from health.harvard.edu/Diary. In the weeks to come, you’ll be asked to record what you eat again. There’s nothing like a before-and-after food diary to help you see how far you’ve come on your sojourn to eating more healthfully and changing habits.

Here are some tips for record-keeping success.

■ **Don’t wait to write.** To get the most accurate impression of what and how much you consume, jot down what you’ve eaten as soon as you eat it. If you wait until the end of the day, it’s likely you’ll forget some of the things you ate earlier. If you don’t have your journal page with you when you’re eating, make notes on your cell phone, tablet computer, pocket calendar, or memo pad and record them in your food diary later. Strive to write down every mouthful of food—even tastes, snacks, and sips—within 15 minutes of consuming it.

■ **Do get the details.** Record relevant important details, including the time of your meal or snack, where you ate, whether you were doing something else while you were eating, and the type of food you consumed—whether, for example, it was a meal from scratch or fast food you picked up on the go. These added data will help reveal patterns.

■ **Do record portion sizes.** Record the specific amounts of each food you eat—for example, 1 cup of orange juice or 3 ounces of chicken. (For help in determining portion sizes, see Table 2, “What’s a serving?” page 14) Measure portion sizes with standard measuring utensils and a kitchen scale. This not only helps you track your food consumption but will give you familiarity with standard serving sizes. You’ll probably be surprised by what a 3-ounce serving size of chicken or a half-cup of pasta looks like on your plate. Over time, you can begin to “eyeball” servings more accurately and skip the actual measuring.

■ **Don’t sweat your mistakes.** Did you overeat after a difficult work day? You may be tempted to forget about it and not record it, but do it anyway—food records can help you regain a sense of control. A “bad” day can actually give you important information to help you understand why you did or didn’t achieve your goals. Think long-term. One day is not going to make or break anything.

■ **Don’t count calories (yet).** Right now we’re focusing on food choices, not calories. Is the pasta white or whole wheat? Is the meat lean or fatty? Is it butter, margarine, or olive oil on your bread? These are the things that make a difference to your heart, brain, and overall health.

■ **Keep it private.** Your food diary is for your own self-discovery. No one else has to see it or judge it. The more honest and accurate you are about your diet and exercise habits, the more enlightened you will become in the next several weeks and beyond.

■ **Keep track of exercise, too.** A food diary is even more helpful if you also track your exercise and physical activity. You can use a simple chart like the one below, or one of the apps listed in “Quick tip: Enlist technology,” above. Give yourself credit for everyday activities such as taking the stairs at work and walking the dog. You’ll begin to see how exercise and diet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your exercise diary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quick tip **Enlist technology.** Some people prefer pen-and-paper for their food diary or to track their exercise routine, but technology can help keep you organized and on track, too. Saving your food diary as a file on a Web-based note-taking program like Evernote allows you to access it from any computer or smartphone, making it easier to keep information handy and updated. Food diary and exercise tracking Web sites—such as MyFitnessPal.com and www.supertracker.usda.gov—will do the same. You can explore the multitude of health apps that are freely available for smartphones and tablet computers, such as calorie counters, cooking guides, and shopping guides (a few we like are Fooducate, MyFitnessPal.com Blood Sugar Tracker, and Runkeeper). Keep in mind that not all apps will be useful, and they can’t always be customized to meet your needs as well as your own notebook can. Pedometers and fitness monitors are other great tools for gaining awareness of your activity level and setting specific exercise goals.
are linked, which is helpful especially if you’re trying to lose weight.

**Shopping smarts**

There’s a list of healthful foods on page 16, so you know what to look for in the market, but here are some other tips for helping ensure you fill your cart with them:

**Start at the perimeter of the grocery store**

That's where you’ll find the most healthful, freshest, least-processed options. Try to shop the produce, fish, lean meat, low-fat dairy, and bread sections of the store as much as possible to avoid the temptations lurking in the aisles containing snack cakes, chips, sodas, and other packaged and processed foods. Concentrate on filling your basket with healthful fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein. After you’ve shopped the outer boundary of the store, use your list to navigate the rest of the aisles. Look above and below the center shelves for the most healthful selections.

**Don’t shop on an empty stomach**

We all know what happens when you go to the grocery store when your stomach is rumbling! Everything looks good, especially those quick, easy-to-eat snacks. If you're hungry, have a healthful snack or meal before shopping. You'll be less tempted to fill your cart with impulse items.

**Get organized**

Make a list of foods you need. Do your menu planning for a week at a time, and do your grocery shopping on the same day of each week. A simple routine eliminates the need for midweek trips to the store, which may tempt you to buy food that’s not on your list.

**Become a comparison shopper**

Decide what’s most important to you when selecting foods, whether it’s sodium, fiber, sugar, calories, or healthful fat, and then home in on that nutrient by reading labels. You probably won’t find the perfect food, but you will surely make better decisions by comparing labels. If you’re trying to lose weight, pay particular attention to calories and the serving size listed. Ignore the calories from total fat, though. A calorie is a calorie. (But do try to avoid foods whose fat comes mostly from trans fats or saturated fat.)

**Becoming label-savvy**

Most of the truly healthful foods like fruits and vegetables don’t have nutrition labels on them. Packaged foods, on the other hand, do, and reading the label is your best guide to choosing the most healthful options. How can you tell whether one breakfast cereal, for example, is better than another? Compare them by checking the Nutrition Facts panel. Here’s a step-by-step approach to interpreting its lingo.

**Step 1:** Check the serving size and servings per container. Serving size is always the first item on the label. All other information is based on that serving size. In the example above, you can see that the serving size is 1 cup. The 250 calories listed on the label refer to each 1-cup serving, not the entire package. The servings per container tell you how many portions are in the whole box, package, or can. In this example, there are two servings per container, or 2 cups total. When comparing products, make sure they have the same serving size for an accurate comparison. Most of the time a package will have more than one serving in it. If you choose to eat more than the serving size listed, you’ll be taking in more calories, carbohydrates, and other nutrients. Multiply all of the data by the servings per container to get the total amounts for the container.

**Step 2:** Check the saturated fat and trans fat content of the food. For a general healthful diet, keep saturated fat and cholesterol low and avoid trans fat. Look for foods that have 0 grams (g) of trans fat and are lowest in saturated fat and cholesterol. Avoid foods that have the words “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” in the ingredients list.
Step 3: Compare the sodium content to the calories per serving. You’ll want to keep sodium as low as possible. A rule of thumb: choose items in which the sodium content is less than or equal to the calories per serving. For a food with 250 calories per serving, look for a sodium content of no more than 250 mg. Also look for low-sodium, low-salt, or unsalted versions.

Step 4: Look at the fiber content of the food you’re choosing. Any food with more than 5 g of fiber per serving is a good choice for fiber. Aim for 25 to 35 g of fiber per day in total.

Step 5: Look at the sugar content of the food you’re considering. Steer clear of foods that have sugar, honey, molasses, corn syrup, corn sugar, fructose, or high-fructose corn syrup among the first three ingredients. Other sugar aliases to watch for include agave nectar, brown sugar, cane sugar, corn sweetener, dextrose, maltose, fruit juice concentrate, and glucose.

Step 6: Decipher the percent daily value. Located on the Nutrition Facts label, the percent daily value is based on someone who eats exactly 2,000 calories a day. It’s a useful tool to compare the nutritional value of two items quickly (assuming the serving size is the same). As a general rule, when the percent daily value

Table 2 What’s a serving?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD GROUP</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF ONE SERVING</th>
<th>SERVING SIZE EQUIVALENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains</td>
<td>1 slice whole-grain bread</td>
<td>1 compact disc case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup cooked brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, or other whole-grain product</td>
<td>½ baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ whole-grain English muffin</td>
<td>½ hockey puck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¼ whole-wheat bagel</td>
<td>¼ hockey puck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>1 cup raw leafy greens</td>
<td>2 cupped hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup (cooked or raw) chopped, non-leafy vegetables</td>
<td>1 rounded handful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup vegetable juice</td>
<td>1 small juice glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 small sweet potato</td>
<td>1 computer mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>½ cup (sliced or diced) fresh or frozen fruit, or fruit canned in its own juice</td>
<td>1 rounded handful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 small apple, orange, or peach</td>
<td>1 baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>1½ oz hard cheese</td>
<td>4 dice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 oz processed cheese</td>
<td>6 dice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¾ cup low-fat milk</td>
<td>container of yogurt (6 oz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats, fish, and beans</td>
<td>4 oz fish</td>
<td>1 checkbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 oz meat or poultry</td>
<td>1 deck of cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¼ cup cooked dried beans</td>
<td>1 golf ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ oz nuts or seeds</td>
<td>1 walnut in shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 tablespoon peanut butter</td>
<td>½ walnut in shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats and oils</td>
<td>1 teaspoon butter or margarine</td>
<td>tip of thumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 tablespoon oil</td>
<td>about ½ shot glass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of a particular nutrient is around 20% or more, that’s considered high in that nutrient. That can be a good thing if it’s fiber we’re talking about, but not so good if it’s sodium or saturated fat.

Make a clean start

How can you stick to your new healthy eating plan when your cupboards are full of chips, cookies, or candy? While you’re stocking up on healthful foods, get rid of stuff that’s not so healthy. Your environment can influence what you eat, and the mere sight of food can stimulate your appetite.

Toss out these unhealthy foods:
- bacon and high-fat cold cuts
- candy
- jam-filled cereal bars
- chicken nuggets
- chips
- cookies
- crackers (other than whole-wheat, low-salt)
- doughnuts
- french fries
- fruit roll-ups or fruit snacks
- full-fat cheese
- granola bars with chocolate or other added sugars
- ice cream
- muffins
- popsicles
- snack cakes
- soda
- toaster tarts
- white bread
- whole milk

Begin by setting goals

In this first week, it’s important to have a clear idea of your goals for the coming weeks. Your task at the moment is to use your food diary to determine which aspects of your diet need improvement. Whether you’re aiming to cook at home more, eat fewer processed foods, or consume less sodium, setting personal goals is an important part of your healthful-eating plan. They give you something meaningful to strive for, and a standard by which you can judge your success. Only you can identify your own goals, but here are some starting points:

- Fruits and vegetables. Let’s face it: eating enough fruits and vegetables is a challenge for most of us. About three days into your food diary (two weekdays and one weekend day would be helpful), take stock of which fruits and vegetables you consumed and how many you ate in relation to your goal. Ideally, in three days, you should have about nine servings of fruit and about 12 servings of vegetables. How did you do? Where do you need to improve? Write your answers here:

- Cooking from scratch. There is no better way to get control of your intake of sodium, calories, fats, and other nutrients than to prepare your meals at home using whole, unprocessed ingredients. According to your food diary, how often did you eat out? How many processed foods did you consume? In those three days, how many times did you cook from scratch? Write your answers here:

- Eating habits. Most of us could benefit from slowing down and devoting our attention to eating. When we multitask with food or eat quickly, we can consume more food (and therefore calories) without realizing it and sacrifice a feeling of satisfaction. How many times did you eat while also doing something else? How much time did you spend eating at each meal? Write your answers here:

Take a look at your answers and establish general goals based on your current habits. To set goals successfully, keep the following guidelines in mind.

Start small

Aim to make just three or four small diet changes in the weeks to follow (one or two goals per week) rather than trying to radically overhaul your eating habits.
Healthy food shopping ideas

To help you make healthy eating a priority, you’ll need to be organized. Plan your menu for the week and take this general list to the store for ideas on what to buy. Having it with you will help you make healthier choices, stock your pantry with the right foods, and prevent impulse buying.

**Fruit:** Aim for two to three fruits each day. Buy at least two different fruits each week.
- apples
- bananas
- blueberries
- grapefruit
- grapes
- kiwi
- melons
- oranges
- peaches
- pears
- strawberries

**Grains:** Choose the whole-grain variety whenever possible.
- bread (whole-grain; the first ingredient should list the word “whole”)
- cereal (choose cereals with 5 g or more of fiber and fewer than 5 g of sugar per serving)
- flour (whole-wheat; may be white or brown in color)
- oatmeal (old-fashioned rolled oats or steel-cut oats)
- pasta or noodles (whole-wheat)
- rice (brown)
- tortillas (whole-grain)

**Vegetables:** Eat at least 3 to 4 cups of vegetables each day. Variety can make food more interesting and delicious. Buy at least two different vegetables each week.
- asparagus
- beets
- bok choy
- broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- cabbage
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celery
- cucumber
- eggplant
- green beans
- greens: chard, collards, kale, leeks, rad
- lettuce: bibb, red, romaine
- mushrooms
- onions, shallots
- peas, pea pods
- peppers: green, red, yellow
- ready-to-eat veggie snacks: carrots, celery, radishes
- spinach
- squash: acorn, butternut, yellow, zucchini
- sweet potatoes or yams
- tomatoes
- egg substitutes
- eggs
- gluten-free
- green beans
- greens: chard, collards, kale, leeks, rad
- lettuce: bibb, red, romaine
- mushrooms
- onions, shallots
- peas, pea pods
- peppers: green, red, yellow
- ready-to-eat veggie snacks: carrots, celery, radishes
- spinach
- squash: acorn, butternut, yellow, zucchini
- sweet potatoes or yams
- tomatoes

**Meat:** Try to limit red meat to no more than one to two servings per week. Avoid cured and processed meats like ham, hot dogs, and many lunch meats, and choose lean cuts of uncured meats instead.
- lean beef: top round, flank, rump roast
- pork: tenderloin

**Dairy:** Use small to moderate amounts of low-fat dairy—mostly as a topping or in a side dish.
- cheese (low-fat, part skim, 1% cottage cheese)
- eggs

**Beverages:** Beverages may not be as satiating as solid food and can contribute to weight gain. In general, stick with drinks that are lower in calories and have no added sugar. Fruit juice has as many sugar calories as soda, so keep servings small.
- bottled water
- coffee
- fruit juices

**Oils**
- canola oil
- olive oil
- peanut oil
- safflower oil
- sesame oil

**Spices and other seasonings**
- balsamic vinegar
- basil (fresh or dried)
- bay leaves
- chives
- cinnamon
- curry powder
- dill
- garlic
- ginger
- mint leaves
- oregano
- parsley (fresh or dried)
- pepper
- peppercorns
- poultry seasoning
- rosemary
- salsa
- salt
- soy sauce (low-sodium)
- thyme (fresh or dried)

**Frozen foods**
- egg substitutes
- fruit, such as berries
- vegetables (no added sauces, broccoli, corn, carrots, spinach, mixed)
- vegetable juice

**Canned goods**
- beans (black, red, white, rinse to reduce sodium)
- broths (low-sodium, low-fat)
- evaporated skim milk
- spaghetti or pasta sauce (low-sodium)
- tomatoes, tomato paste, tomato sauce
- vegetables (mushrooms, beets, roasted red peppers, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, rice to reduce sodium)

**Staples**
- mustard
- relish
- tub margarine (with no trans fats)
- vinegar
The gradual approach is a setup for success because it’s not overwhelming and removes the pressure. Even though you’re setting mini goals, you can often get lots of mileage out of them. By eating out less often or consuming fewer processed foods, for example, you’ll automatically reduce the number of calories you’re taking in, slash your intake of saturated fat, and consume less sodium.

**Be realistic**
Start from where you are now and try to improve. If, according to your food diary, for example, you ate lunch out five times in five days, a good goal to set for yourself would be to cut back to three restaurant or take-in lunches and bring your lunch to work two days. Once you get used to that change, you can add even more days to your bring-lunch-from-home routine, so that eating lunch out eventually becomes the exception.

**Keep goals specific**
Specific, short-term, behavioral goals are more motivating and easier to measure than general, long-term, end-result goals. Instead of “I want to lose 10 pounds by my birthday,” for example, a specific, behavior-driven goal would be “I’ll have a salad for lunch each day.” Instead of “I’ll stop snacking,” make it your goal to set out a tangerine for your afternoon snack. Behavior-driven goals are easier to achieve because they focus on one step toward a result that can take months to accomplish.

Each week, when you reach your behavior-driven goal, you earn an opportunity to celebrate a personal achievement, which helps maintain motivation. At the end of each week, assess your progress and reward yourself for the small changes you made. For instance, you might treat yourself to a movie or another activity that gives you pleasure. Moving in the right direction deserves some acknowledgment to encourage you to continue positive change.

A note about wording: state your goals throughout this six-week journey as “I will...” It’s a more powerful proclamation than “I want to...” or “I’d like to...” Based on your food diary, what specific goals would you like to set? List three goals for changes you will make in your diet in the coming weeks.
Eating a small, nutritious breakfast is a great way to jump-start the day. Yet many people skip breakfast because they are in a rush, aren’t hungry, or are trying to cut calories. That’s a mistake because eating a healthful breakfast has benefits. Breakfast will be your focus for this week. We’ll tackle lunch, dinner, and snacks in the coming weeks, but in the meantime, keep in mind the “Practical steps for a healthful diet” on page 2 at all meals.

Studies suggest that eating breakfast regularly can reduce the risk of high cholesterol, decrease insulin resistance (a condition that increases the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease), improve your performance on memory-related tasks, minimize impulse snacking and overeating at other meals, and boost your intake of essential nutrients. It may seem to defy logic, but studies also suggest that eating breakfast regularly can help keep your weight in check. The Harvard-led Health Professionals Follow-up Study, which has followed the health and habits of more than 50,000 men since 1986, has found that those who skip breakfast gain more weight and have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Keep your breakfast moderate in size, though. A study published in Nutrition Journal found that people who ate a large breakfast ended up eating more total calories at the end of the day. In particular, bread, eggs, sausage, cheese, yogurt, and butter were among the items that contributed to the high calorie count. As with other meals, focus on produce and whole grains. Minimize the amounts of full-fat dairy products, breakfast potatoes, and meats, and prepare eggs without a lot of extra calories (boiling or poaching is a great alternative to frying).

So keep your breakfast calories low and you may be like one of the 10,000 members of the National Weight Control Registry. Of this group, a self-selected database of Americans who’ve lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for at least a year, 78% report eating breakfast every day.

The healthy breakfast plate

To create a healthy, balanced breakfast, include three food groups: lean protein, whole-grain carbohydrates, and fruit. Because most people are in the habit of eating vegetables later in the day, the proportions here look different than the overall Healthy Eating Plate. Think of a healthy breakfast in thirds: one-third protein, such as an egg, low-fat cottage cheese, plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt (especially the Greek kind), or nuts; one-third starch, such as whole-grain bread or oatmeal; and one-third fruit (see Figure 3, at left). Notice that bacon, sausage, or other cured and processed breakfast meats are nowhere in sight. That’s because these meats are high in sodium and saturated fat, a known artery clogger. In addition, science has
linked cured or processed meats to an increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and colorectal cancer, and a daily serving of these kinds of meats to a 20% higher risk of death.

If you’re not a “breakfast person,” it’s fine to keep portions small, but try to include all three food groups, especially protein, which can create a feeling of fullness and prevent carbohydrate cravings. Try a tablespoon of natural peanut butter on a slice of whole-wheat toast with a piece of fruit.

Setting goals for breakfast success
In addition to the overall goals you set for yourself in week 1, your goal for this week is to use your food diary to evaluate your breakfast routine, if you have one. During the three days you kept your food diary, what did you eat for breakfast? Did your breakfasts follow the basic formula (one-third healthy carbohydrate, one-third lean protein, one-third fruit)? Are you missing any food groups? Is there a general pattern to your breakfast routine? Write your answers here:

Comparing your own habits to the healthful ones we discussed, do you see a goal to aim for? What do you have to do to achieve it? Do you want to switch to a cereal with less sugar? Do you want to eat at home instead of grabbing a high-calorie muffin at the coffee shop? Do you want to cut back on bacon and sausage and strive to eat more fruit?

Be as specific and as realistic as possible when setting your goal and planning how to accomplish it. And be sure to troubleshoot. If your goal, for example, is to eat breakfast before leaving for work in the morning, think about the practical changes you would need to make for it to succeed. Will the extra time it takes to eat at home make you late for work? If so, can you get up 15 minutes earlier or shave the time from another part of your routine?

In any case, make sure to have quick, healthful foods on hand that don’t require much preparation, such as low-fat cottage cheese, nonfat plain yogurt, whole-grain bread or cereal, fresh fruit, and nuts.

For my breakfast goal this week, I will…
Example: This week, I will get up 15 minutes earlier so I have time to eat before I leave for work.

Fresh starts
Morning routines are hard to break. If your idea of breakfast is grabbing a coffee and a doughnut on your way to work, finding time to eat healthfully in the morning may seem daunting. With a little planning, however, it’s easier than you think. Here are some healthful breakfast suggestions, which follow the basic formula of equal parts whole grains + lean protein + fruit:

• whole-grain cereal (at least 5 g of fiber and less than 5 g sugar) + milk (skim or 1% milk or soymilk) + a small banana or ½ cup berries
• ½ cup cooked oatmeal with cinnamon + 2 tablespoons nuts + ½ cup berries
• a slice of 100% whole-grain bread + 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter + a small banana

Choosing a breakfast cereal
With the hundreds of types of cereal on the market, bran cereal, bran flakes, and steel-cut oatmeal are typically the healthiest bets. To choose the healthiest breakfast cereal, read the label and look for

• 5 g or more of fiber per serving
• less than 300 mg of sodium per serving
• less than 5 g of sugar per serving
• whole grain as the first item on the ingredient list.

Serving sizes for cereal can vary widely, though 1 cup is common. If you’re watching calories, make sure to choose nonfat milk.

Quick tip
You can prepare ordinary oatmeal in the microwave in two minutes. Just mix ½ cup of oatmeal with ½ cup of skim milk and heat on high for two minutes. Skip the individual oatmeal packets, which can be loaded with sugar. Slice a small banana or other fruit on top and sprinkle with cinnamon.
Your healthy breakfast shopping list

A list of healthful foods can help keep you on track while food shopping. Use this list to give yourself a morning advantage. Stocking your kitchen with healthful options will help you avoid making unhealthful choices.

• bananas
• berries (fresh or frozen)
• cinnamon
• eggs
• English muffins (100% whole-wheat)
• grapes
• low-fat cheese
• low-sodium vegetable juice
• melons
• milk (skim, 1%, or soy)
• natural peanut butter
• nuts (unsalted)
• oatmeal
• pineapple
• whole-grain oatmeal bread
• whole-grain wheat bread
• whole-grain cereal
• whole-grain crackers
• whole-grain mini bagels
• whole-wheat tortillas
• whole-grain waffles
• yogurt (plain low-fat or nonfat)

• breakfast sandwich: 100% whole-wheat English muffin or whole-grain mini bagel + an egg or a slice of low-fat cheese + an orange
• breakfast burrito: 1 small whole-wheat tortilla + a scrambled egg or a slice of low-fat cheese and salsa + sliced mango.
• 2 slices of whole-grain toast or 1 whole-grain English muffin + ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese + ¾ cup pineapple
• whole-grain French toast + milk + ½ cup berries

For a lighter breakfast, try these suggestions:
• 1 serving whole-grain crackers + 1 ounce low-fat cheese + ¼ cup grapes
• ¼ cup nuts + fruit or low-sodium vegetable juice
• 1 small apple or banana + 1 tablespoon peanut butter
• 1 hard-boiled egg + baby carrots + 2 tablespoons low-fat dip

Make a morning exercise appointment

First thing in the morning, before work or other activities, is often the best time to exercise. This way, exercise doesn’t compete with other tasks and activities that can fill up the day and get in the way of a regular exercise program. Even if you’re not a morning person, you can train yourself to become a morning exercise person. Set your fitness clothes out the night before. Set your alarm a half-hour earlier, and go out the door for a brisk walk before you do anything else. Or head to an early-morning exercise class. It’s just a matter of getting into a habit.

What if you’d really rather push the snooze button? Get up anyway, but give yourself the 10-minute rule. If you’re still miserable after 10 minutes of working out at the gym or running or walking outside, you can skip your session for that day. Chances are, though, if you’ve already gotten dressed and you’re there, you’re much less likely to give up. To hold yourself accountable and give yourself credit, be sure to cross exercise off your to-do list when you’re through. On mornings you can’t work out, keep sneakers with you and look for ways to get a walk or a jog in during the day. Doing something on the days you said you would is important for maintaining momentum.

Pizza for breakfast?

If you’re not wowed by traditional breakfast foods like whole-grain cereal or eggs, there’s no rule against having leftover pizza from last night’s dinner if it’s made with healthful ingredients. Here’s how to make your own quick-fix breakfast pizza.

Start with a whole-grain pita or English muffin and add a dose of low-sodium tomato sauce and low-fat cheese. Even better, dice up some green and red peppers to sprinkle on top. Put it in the toaster oven or regular oven set at 350° for about ten minutes, or until cheese is melted and the bread’s edges are crispy.

Have a small glass of 100% juice to complete the meal, or have a piece of fruit on the side. Keep the general breakfast formula in mind: whole grains, lean protein, and a fruit, so you’ll have a balanced meal.

Curb coffee-drink calories

It’s easy to jam extra calories into your coffee. Many people order large coffee drinks laden with milk and sweeteners, which can equal the caloric content of an entire meal. Even a modest tall (12-ounce) café latte made with skim milk is still adding 100 calories to
your daily total. With today’s specialty coffee drinks, it’s easy to load up on unhealthy fat, sugar, and calories without eating a bite of food. And since liquid calories may be less filling than solid food, drinking sweet drinks increases the chance that you will consume excess calories. Studies also show that consuming too many sugary foods and beverages can increase your risk of heart disease and diabetes. Moreover, research cites sugar-sweetened beverages like coffee drinks as a major source of added sugar in the American diet and a major contributor to weight gain.

Coffee by itself isn’t a bad thing. It contains caffeine, which boosts alertness. It also has been linked to a lower risk of diabetes. And a 2012 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that coffee drinkers between 50 and 71 years of age had a lower risk of death from many diseases compared to those who abstained from coffee. The catch is not to take the bad with the good. Stick with black coffee or tea with only a little milk or sugar. Once you’ve had your coffee boost, switch to beverages that have no sugar. To get adequate hydration, anything watery counts, including water, coffee, soup, oranges, and watermelon. You’re drinking enough if your urine is pale or clear.

---

**BREAKFAST GROUND RULES**

- Eat a small breakfast every day.
- Follow the balanced-breakfast formula: whole-grain carbohydrates, lean protein, and fruit.
- Keep breakfast at around 300 to 400 calories.
- Make coffee drinks an occasional treat if you drink them at all.
During a busy day, it’s easy to get sidetracked from your healthy eating goals, but having a healthful lunch is important. Eating four hours or so after breakfast helps maintain your blood sugar level so your energy won’t take a midday dive. A healthful lunch will also help you concentrate and function better at work in the afternoon and help you avoid hunger that can lead to overeating at dinner, a set-up for weight gain.

Lunch is an opportunity to enjoy high-nutrient, disease-fighting foods. Use the healthy lunch plate (see Figure 4, below) as your model—your basic formula for what to eat and how much. Vegetables should dominate your plate. How about a whole-wheat pita roll-up stuffed with tomatoes, carrots, green and red peppers, and about ¼ cup hummus? Add some turkey or chicken and you’ve got a great meal. The same formula applies to dinner, too (see Figure 5, “The healthy dinner plate,” page 27).

**The healthy lunch plate**

To create a healthful, balanced lunch, include three food groups: lean protein, whole-grain carbohydrates, and produce. Think of a healthful lunch (and dinner too) in halves and quarters: roughly half of your plate should be vegetables or fruit; one-quarter should be lean protein such as fish, chicken, turkey, tofu, beans, or low-fat cottage cheese; and one-quarter should be whole grains, such as one slice of whole-grain bread, or half a cup of brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, or quinoa. Feel free to include a small amount of healthy fat, such as a tablespoon of oil-and-vinegar dressing on your salad.

**Setting goals for lunch success**

This week, use your food diary to focus on lunch. Take a look now at your entries for three days. During that time, what did you eat for lunch? Did your lunches follow the basic formula (lots of vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein)? Are you missing any food groups? Is there a general pattern to your lunches? Write your answers here:

Now, looking at your lunch pattern, what goal will you set for yourself for lunch? What do you have to do to achieve it? Remember to be as specific and as realistic as possible when planning to accomplish your goal. If your objective, for example, is to eat a healthful lunch even though you’re so busy at work that you can’t take much time to eat, you could bring your lunch to work and keep it in the refrigerator or in an insulated bag with an ice pack.
Also, troubleshoot by asking yourself why you haven’t been doing this already. Is it because you tend to be too rushed in the morning to think ahead about lunch? If that’s the case, prepare your lunch the night before, refrigerate it, and keep a note by the door so you don’t forget it. Bringing lunch from home helps you control what you’re eating. If you plan to buy lunch that day, bring something healthful from home with you, such as an apple, to round out the meal.

For lunches at home, try having a small plate of healthful dinner leftovers, or make a sandwich with whole-grain bread, lean protein, and 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise. Fill the other half of your plate with a salad or raw veggies to munch.

Many people grab food on the fly and fail to eat a real lunch, perhaps eating a croissant on the way to a meeting or other event. When that happens, acknowledge it and mentally account for those calories by saying to yourself, “This is part of lunch.” Then fill in with an apple and a carton of nonfat plain yogurt as soon as you get the chance. Don’t shortchange yourself on calories during the day. Research shows that people who skip lunch or dinner expend fewer calories because they don’t move as much. Moreover, you’ll likely feel cranky and lethargic. And by dinnertime—look out! You’re apt to overeat to make up for the day’s lack of fuel.

Remember to start with baby steps and to set small, process-driven goals. If you’re eating lunch out five days a week now, for example, aim to bring your lunch two of those days. That’s realistic and achievable for many of us.

**For my lunch goal this week I will…**

*Example: I will bring my lunch two out of the five work days.*

---

**What’s for lunch?**

Once you’ve set your goals and looked over the healthy lunch plate, you’ll need to decide what to eat for lunch. Need help getting started? Here are some lunch ideas to rotate through:

- 1 serving whole-grain crackers, baby carrots, ½ cup hummus, and an orange
- 1 whole-wheat tortilla, topped with ½ cup low-sodium canned black or pinto beans, 1 ounce low-fat shredded cheese, and 1 tablespoon salsa, heated in the microwave and rolled up, with some chopped lettuce and tomatoes
- 2 slices whole-grain bread with ½ recipe tuna salad with curry and apples (see “Tuna salad tuna salad” page 44), plus plenty of tomatoes and romaine lettuce
- 1 serving whole-grain crackers and 2 ounces low-fat cheese, with carrot and jicama sticks (a root vegetable), an apple, and flavored seltzer
- California turkey wrap (whole-wheat tortilla, 4 ounces turkey, hummus, sprouts), plus a fresh fruit cup
- 1 whole-grain roll, 1 cup bean and lentil soup (see “Bean and lentil soup,” page 45,) grape tomatoes, and a peach
- peanut butter sandwich made with 2 tablespoons peanut butter on whole-grain bread with a side of carrot sticks, plus a small banana
- wasabi roast beef sandwich (whole-grain bread, 3 ounces lean roast beef, 1 tablespoon wasabi mayonnaise, and spinach) and 1 cup melon
- chicken Caesar wrap (whole-wheat tortilla, chicken, and romaine lettuce with 1 tablespoon Caesar dressing), plus an orange
- 1 cup low-sodium soup (minestrone, chicken noodle, or lentil) with a serving of whole-wheat crackers
- 1 cup chili made with lots of vegetables and ground turkey
- 1 cup whole-wheat pasta salad made with 4 ounces chicken or tuna and vegetables
- pizza made with a whole-wheat English muffin or whole-wheat pita topped with vegetables and 2 ounces of low-fat cheese, such as part-skim mozzarella or reduced-fat shredded cheeses
- stuffed peppers made with roughly ½ cup brown rice and 4 ounces ground turkey
- 1 cup low-fat or nonfat plain Greek yogurt with berries or fresh fruit and 2 tablespoons nuts
- vegetable quesadilla made with 1 whole-wheat tortilla, 2 ounces part-skim mozzarella, and vegetables
- soy or vegetarian hot dog on a whole-wheat hot dog bun with homemade coleslaw made with healthy vegetable oil
• veggie burger with lettuce and tomato on a whole-wheat bun, with a small green salad
• 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese and a cup of fresh fruit
• hard-boiled egg with a green salad and ½ pear
• whole-grain crackers or bread with ¼ cup hummus and 2 ounces low-fat cheese and sliced vegetables on top.

Lunchtime strategies
Lunchtime can be a minefield of temptation. From sandwich shops exploding with high-calorie sandwiches to salad bars stocked with tempting mayonnaise-based salads, it can be difficult to get through lunch without making some poor choices. Here are some lunch survival strategies.

Salad bar survival
A trip to the salad bar is a convenient way to load up your lunch with vegetables. But while salads sound healthful, they can quickly add hefty doses of calories and artery-clogging saturated fat. Regular salad dressings, cheeses, mayonnaise-based salads (such as tuna, chicken, and egg salads), and desserts (such as rice pudding and ambrosia) drive up calorie counts. The good news? Many salad bars have so much variety now that it’s easy to work around these potential diet pitfalls without feeling deprived.

Take these steps to raise your next visit to the salad bar to a more healthful level.

- **Step 1: Build a vegetable base.** Most salad bars have two sizes of tins—large and small. Go for the large tin at lunch and load it up with leafy greens and raw or grilled vegetables. By getting the large-size salad, you’ll eat more produce when the pickings are plentiful.
- **Step 2: Add some protein.** To your veggie base, add a couple spoonfuls of garbanzo and kidney beans, or three-bean salad—typical salad bar offerings. Beans are an excellent source of disease-fighting fiber—and they’re filling! Add some grilled chicken, low-fat cottage cheese, or chopped eggs to complete the picture of a fulfilling lunch. With a large, hearty salad as your lunch, you’re less apt to get hungry in the afternoon and become susceptible to unplanned, impulsive snacking.
- **Step 3: Add a small amount of healthy fat.** Sprinkle on the nuts and seeds. They are high in heart-healthy unsaturated fat and healthy protein, give you a feeling of fullness, and help food stay in your stomach longer. If you opt for nuts and seeds, though, go with a low-calorie salad dressing to keep your calorie count down. Or sprinkle on a small dose of oil and vinegar.

Avoid large cheese chunks or use them only sparingly. Cheese packs a calorie and saturated fat wallop. A light sprinkle of a strongly flavored cheese like feta or Parmesan can deliver flavor with fewer calories. Feta, especially, is so flavorful that you can add less of it.

Creamy salad dressings have the most saturated fat, so oil-based dressings are a better option. To limit calories, use dressing sparingly or dilute it with a little vinegar, or opt for a light or nonfat dressing. If you choose a high-fat dressing, skip nuts, seeds, or cheese on your salad.

Your healthful lunch shopping list

- avocados
- bananas
- beans: kidney, garbanzo, white (cannellini)
- canned tuna (packed in water)
- carrots
- celery
- cheeses (low-fat)
- cherry tomatoes
- chicken (baked or grilled, not processed)
- chicken noodle soup (low-sodium)
- cucumbers
- dark green leafy lettuce
- eggs
- feta cheese (low-fat)
- green peppers
- hummus
- insulated lunch bag
- lean roast beef
- lentil soup (low-sodium)
- minestrone soup (low-sodium)
- mozzarella cheese (low-fat)
- mushrooms
- peanut butter (natural) or other nut butter
- pineapple
- plain nonfat yogurt
- plastic forks, spoons, knives
- red peppers
- salsa
- sandwich bags
- snap peas
- tomatoes
- turkey (sliced, fresh baked)
- whole-grain bread
- whole-grain crackers
- whole-grain English muffins
- whole-grain rolls
- whole-grain tortillas
- whole-wheat bagels
- whole-wheat pitas
- veggie burgers
- yogurt (plain, nonfat)
Bypass the bacon bits. They’re high in fat, they don’t offer much nutritionally, and they’re processed—the worst kind of meat.

**Step 4: Finish with whole grains and fruit.** Look for whole grains like barley or bulgur wheat to sprinkle on top. Or add a few slices of fruit.

Many salad bars also offer rice pudding, ambrosia salad, and other treats. Even though they’re available, don’t kid yourself. They’re dessert, not salads. If you’re trying to control calories, choose fresh fruit instead.

**Make your move**

Lunch is the perfect time to treat yourself to a walking break. Instead of spending all of your lunchtime sitting and eating, eat a quick healthy meal and go for a brisk walk by yourself or with a friend or coworker. Assess your speed by taking the “talk test.” If you can walk and talk effortlessly, consider picking up the pace at least part of the time. To gain the cardiovascular benefits, you need to walk fast enough to get your heart rate up, enough that you need to pause your conversation to take a breath.

Take walking breaks during the rest of your day as well, such as every hour you’re at your computer. Wearing a pedometer is a great way to keep track of the steps you take—you’ll be surprised how little walking breaks add up over the day. Research shows that it’s best to avoid sitting for long stretches. A 2012 study in *Archives of Internal Medicine* involving more than 200,000 people over age 45 found that prolonged sitting was associated with a higher risk of death regardless of how physically active they were when they weren’t sitting. In other words, spending hours upon hours sitting is harmful even if you get plenty of exercise at other times.

**Deli dilemmas**

Let’s face it: sub shops are everywhere, and at lunch time they can be a convenient choice. The downside? Many deli sandwiches are made with cured and processed meats, which have been linked to higher rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and colon cancer. In addition, deli meats, cheeses, and mayonnaise-based salads can be loaded with unhealthy fats, calories, and sodium. One example is a foot-long Tuscan chicken melt sandwich offered at a popular sub chain. It weighs in at 760 calories and packs 2,160 milligrams (mg) of sodium, which is more than a day’s worth in one meal. A national upscale sandwich chain offers an Asiago roast beef sandwich with 710 calories and 1,310 mg of sodium. Before succumbing to your favorite deli sandwich, check out its nutrition profile. Many national chains offer online nutrition information that can be enlightening.

**Look for sandwiches**

- with no more than 500 calories per serving
- with no more than 4 g saturated fat
- with less than 500 mg of sodium
- that have vegetables and bean fillings as well as fish, grilled chicken, or turkey, rather than red and processed meats
- that offer plant-based sandwich fillings such as hummus, peanut butter, and other nut butters (almond, cashew)
- that contain healthful fats as well as vitamins and minerals.

**Build a better sandwich**

The benefit of making your own sandwich is that you have full control over what’s in it. A balanced sandwich-based lunch contains lean protein, healthful carbohydrates, and a hefty serving of vegetables. Here are three choices of basic formulas to follow for a sandwich-based lunch:

- full sandwich (2 slices of whole-grain bread)
- half sandwich (1 slice of whole-grain bread) + a salad
- half sandwich (1 slice of whole-grain bread) + 1 cup vegetable-based clear soup.
To build a balanced sandwich, follow these basic steps:

- **Step 1: Start with a healthful foundation.** You can make a sandwich on bread, crackers, pita, or any number of grain-based products so long as you choose a whole-grain variety. Some good choices include whole-wheat bread, oat-bran English muffins, whole-grain tortillas, small whole-wheat bagels, whole-grain crackers, whole-wheat pitas, or oat-bran bread. Remember to choose breads that list “whole” before the grain’s name as the first ingredient. Beware of terms like wheat flour, stone-ground, seven-grain, multigrain, pumpernickel, enriched, fortified, and organic. They don’t necessarily indicate that a particular loaf is whole-grain.

- **Step 2: Spread on a flavorful accent.** Try a small amount of guacamole, mustard, mayonnaise, trans-fat–free margarine (check the label), roasted red peppers, tomato sauce, or salsa.

- **Step 3: Add lean protein.** Try flaked tuna, chopped chicken, turkey breast, low-fat cheese, lean beef, or hummus.

- **Step 4: Accessorize with a crunch.** Consider romaine lettuce, flat-sliced carrots or celery, sliced apples, sliced red and green peppers, sliced cucumbers, tomato, roasted red peppers, mushrooms, pineapple slices, snap peas, or cherry tomatoes.

- **Step 5: Think big.** Layer your sandwich to make a large and appetizing creation with spinach and watercress, tomato, and onion. Roll bean sprouts, shredded cabbage, and slices of green or red pepper into tortillas or flat bread.

**Tap into the benefits of water**

Water has no calories and few, if any, nutrients. Still, it’s an important player in your diet, and lunch is a great opportunity to partake of its benefits. Among its many duties, water aids digestion, helps prevent constipation, normalizes blood pressure, and helps stabilize heartbeat. Water also carries nutrients and oxygen to cells, cushions joints and protects organs and tissues, helps regulate body temperature, and maintains electrolyte (sodium) balance. Most people need about 32 to 64 ounces of fluids each day. Anything watery counts, but water itself—because it’s naturally calorie-free—is an excellent choice.

There is some evidence that drinking two large glasses of water before eating helps people lose weight. Drinking water between meals is also a good strategy. If you wait until you’re thirsty to drink, it’s easy to mistake thirst for hunger and end up eating food when all you really needed was a tall, cool drink. ♥
A dinner makeover

Dinner is often the biggest and most important meal of the day; it’s also a chance to relax after work, spend time with family, or socialize. But fewer and fewer Americans are cooking dinners at home. There are many reasons behind this shift, but in part, it’s because prepared convenience foods are now cheaper and more widely available than ever before, enabling people to eat anywhere. To compete in this marketplace, the makers of fast foods and convenience foods have loaded their offerings with appetite-stimulating fats, sugars, and salt. Fresh vegetables and whole grains are hard to find. Meanwhile, portion sizes in restaurant meals, take-out foods, and snacks have increased, sometimes more than doubling.

By now, you probably realize that to make healthful meals is to prepare them, as much as possible, yourself. For that, you need healthy groceries in your kitchen. Otherwise, you’ll arrive home at the end of day to an empty refrigerator and quickly turn to fast food, frozen entrées, or takeout. Even if you try to make more healthful choices from a restaurant menu, it’s easy to consume lots of calories with few nutrients, almost no vegetables, and no whole grains. A little advance planning can avert this high-calorie, low-nutrient ambush.

Last-minute solutions such as eating take-out several times a week can temporarily make life easier and give you a break. They can also derail your health if they become a pattern. To prepare and eat healthful dinners, it all starts with organization. If you stick to a plan, yet build in some degree of flexibility, you’ll be able to meet the goal of a healthful dinner more consistently. One of the easiest ways to do that is to eat dinner at home as often can you can.

Figure 5 The healthy dinner plate

Fill half your plate with vegetables, one-quarter with lean protein, and one-quarter with whole grains.

The healthy dinner plate

What’s for dinner? Use the healthy dinner plate (see Figure 5, at left) as your basic model of what to eat and how much. The idea, as with lunch, is to fill half of your plate with fruits or vegetables (1 to 2 cups, cooked or raw). Then make one-quarter of your plate healthful carbohydrates and whole grains like brown rice or 100% whole-grain pasta or bread. The remaining quarter of your plate should be lean protein such as fish, chicken, beans, lentils, turkey, or tofu. Extra-lean beef or pork can be included about once a week. Aim for 4 to 6 ounces of protein-rich foods for dinner, with, ideally, fish in the protein spot at least twice a week. Keep in mind that 4 ounces of protein is about the size of a deck of cards.

Setting goals for dinner success

Your goal for this week is to use your food diary to determine how you’re doing with dinner and what you may need to do to improve it. Take a look now at the food diary you kept for three days. During that time,
what did you eat for dinner? Did your dinner follow the basic formula (vegetables, whole grains, lean protein)? Are you missing any food groups? Are you eating too much or too little? How often, in those three days, did you eat dinner out? Do you tend to eat a lot more on weekends? Is there a general pattern to your dinners that might be working against your goal of healthy eating? Write your answers here:

__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Now, looking at your dinner routine, what goal will you set for yourself for dinner? What do you have to do to achieve it? Remember to be as specific and as realistic as possible when planning how to accomplish your goal. And be sure to troubleshoot. If your goal, for example, is to prepare and eat dinner at home at least three days a week, ask yourself why you haven't been doing it already, and anticipate how this change is going to affect your life. Decide how and when you will take the time to plan healthful home dinners. If your goal is to make better choices when you must eat out, think about it in advance (you can even check out menus online before dinner to plan what you'll order). If you tend to eat too much bread at restaurants, ask the server not to bring any. Are appetizers your downfall? Scout the menu for offerings that are vegetable-based, like salads, and ask the server to hold the cheese and bring dressing on the side.

Whether you eat out or at home, you may be one of the many people who need to reduce their dependence on meat as the main dish for every meal. To reach this goal, plan some time to look for meatless recipes or recipes that use very little meat, such as Asian stir-fry meals or Mexican burritos with mostly beans and vegetables.

For my dinner goal this week, I will…

Example: This week, I will stock up on healthy quick-fix meal options, such as frozen vegetables, precooked skinless chicken, whole-wheat pita bread and whole-wheat pasta, and low-sodium pasta sauce—items I can just heat up that need only a side salad to become a balanced meal.

Quick tip Become a weekend warrior in the kitchen. Use the weekends to plan menus, shop, batch-cook, and prep healthful meals for the work week. Proportion single or family-size servings of casseroles and soups in freezer-proof containers and stack them in your freezer. Make it your mission to have a strategy for dinner before going out for the day.

Sneaky ways to get in more fruits and vegetables

We recommend aiming for seven servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which recommends a less ambitious five servings per day, notes that few American adults manage to accomplish even this goal. Dinner is typically the largest meal of the day, and it's also your last chance to strike a healthful balance of foods for the day. If you didn't eat many or any fruits and vegetables at lunch, now's your chance; why not load up on fruits and vegetables to meet your produce quota? Dinner is the time to make up for any lack of nutrients earlier in the day. Plus, piling on the produce means there's less room in your dinner for unhealthful options. Here are some sneaky ways to work more produce into dinner.

• **Roast vegetables along with whatever entrée is in the oven.** Roasting is a great way to let the deep, rich flavors of vegetables shine through because their starches start to convert to sugar at around 375°F, releasing a deep, nutty sweetness. To roast, just bake cut-up vegetables at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes or until they're lightly browned. Any vegetable is a roasting candidate—from mushrooms, onions, eggplant, and zucchini to tomatoes, broccoli, and carrots—so don't limit yourself. Enjoy roasted veggies as a side dish or toss them into pasta dishes and other recipes.

• **Poach veggies in low-sodium chicken broth and white wine.** Add garlic, basil, or tarragon for a flavor bonus. To poach, boil enough liquid to cover the vegetables. When it boils, add the vegetables. Turn down the heat to just below boiling and cook the vegetables for about five to seven minutes, until...
they’re brightly colored and tender-crisp. To retain nutrients, keep a watchful eye on the pot, or set a timer so you don’t overcook.

- **Smuggle fresh cut vegetables into main dishes.** Try adding mushrooms, peppers, zucchini, onions, or carrots into pasta sauce, casseroles, soup, stews, scrambled eggs, and chili.

- **Add pureed vegetables into recipes.** A Penn State study found that covertly adding pureed vegetables into classic foods like a casserole, macaroni and cheese, or carrot bread reduced calorie intake and boosted veggie consumption. Pureed cooked vegetables can easily be used as sauces, soups, spreads, and toppings.

- **Make it your goal to have a salad with dinner most days.** Stock your salad with dark green leafy lettuce and toss in petite peas, tomatoes, onions, celery, carrots, and peppers. Bonus: in addition to the nutrient bonanza you’ll get, studies show that starting meals with a low-calorie salad can help you consume fewer calories at the meal, as long as the salad is no more than 100 calories. A healthful salad consists of about 3 cups of dark green lettuce, ½ cup carrots, a tomato, ¼ cucumber, and 1½ tablespoons of low-calorie dressing.

- **Choose fruit—fresh or frozen, stewed or baked—for dessert.** It all counts toward your daily produce quota. Dried fruits are healthy but high in calories, so eat them sparingly.

### Smart, easy dinners

- Spread low-fat refried beans on a whole-wheat tortilla, add thawed shrimp or leftover chicken, sprinkle with chopped green peppers, add a spoonful of salsa, roll up, and bake for 15 minutes.

- Slice a tofu block into large slices (about three slices per block) and place in a baking pan; add chopped scallions, garlic, and a little low-sodium soy sauce. Meanwhile, toss vegetables such as strips of red pepper in olive oil. Roast tofu and vegetables in the oven for 20 minutes at 375°F. Serve with brown rice or whole-wheat couscous.

- Add ½ can of black, white, or garbanzo beans (buy low sodium or rinse regular canned beans), or salmon chunks to a tossed salad. Serve it with a dressing of oil and balsamic vinegar plus a hearty chunk of whole-wheat bread and olive oil.

- Whip together a two-egg omelete (two eggs plus a teaspoon of water) and fill with any leftover vegetables you have around, such as steamed broccoli from last night’s dinner and some chopped tomatoes. Season with pepper. Or sprinkle on your favorite herb combination, like Herbes de Provence or bouquet garni.

### Upgrade your prepared entrees

Supermarkets are full of quick-fix dinner options, from frozen entrees to prepared foods in the deli. But like restaurant fare, these dishes are typically high in sodium and saturated fat and scant on vegetables. For example, one serving of an entree called “grilled chicken Florentine complete dinner for two” (available in the frozen foods section at supermarkets nationwide) packs 1,090 mg of sodium (most of us need no more than 1,500 mg of sodium for the entire day) and 9 g of saturated fat. To make complete meals like these more healthful when you’re in a pinch, stretch the two-serving package into four servings by fortifying it with your own fresh or frozen vegetables and a can of rinsed and drained beans. You can certainly do the same with almost any supermarket or restaurant take-out dish, including the fresh prepared entrees at the supermarket. Toss fresh vegetables in with your ravioli. Cook up some Brussels sprouts to mix in with tortellini.

**BONUS:** by adding your own healthful ingredients, you’ll reduce the cost of the meal, which is typically pricey, compared with, say, a quick pasta sauce you could make yourself. In fact, why not come up with your own fast, cheap, and delicious pasta sauce recipes to have in your arsenal? (See "Quick tip" on page 30 for an easy pasta sauce recipe.)

### Outwit your appetite at home

Portion control is essential to limiting your calorie intake at any meal, whether you eat out, prepare your own meals, or occasionally grab food on the run. Your appetite isn’t just governed by physical factors. It’s also...
independently influenced by the sight of food and what the people around you are eating or ordering. If you’re trying to lose or maintain your weight, dinner doesn’t have to be your diet downfall. Here are some tips for keeping dinner portions in proportion.

**Train your eye.** Standard servings are generally much smaller than those dished out in restaurants or even what you’re used to at home. Even though you measured food servings at the start of your healthy-eating journey for your food diary, serving sizes can grow over time. Measure your food again now as a refresher course on standard serving sizes (see Table 2, page 14). Developing an eye for serving sizes is helpful at home and when you’re dining out or attending social events, where portions may be too large or the food unlimited.

In a Pennsylvania State University study, researchers manipulated the portions of baked ziti served as a main course at a restaurant. They used the regular portion on some days and one that was 50% larger on others. The price of the meal remained the same. Diners who were served the larger portion ate 43% more baked-ziti calories, as well as more of the accompaniments (a roll and butter and a stuffed tomato), yet surveys showed that all the customers thought their portions were equally appropriate.

**Downsize your tableware.** Oversized plates are fashionable now, but they trick your eyes into thinking bigger portions are appropriate. Serving your meals on smaller plates, on the other hand, can make a small serving look larger. So if your dinner plates are larger than the standard 10.5 inches, get smaller plates or use a luncheon plate or salad plate for your main dish. Save larger plates for festive dinners. Meanwhile, use smaller serving utensils, such as a soup spoon, for doling out portions. In a Cornell University study, participants at an ice cream social given a large bowl ate 31% more ice cream than those given a medium-size bowl. Similarly, with beverages, replace short, wide glasses with tall, slender ones. Research shows that people pour 28% more in short, wide glasses than they do in tall, skinny ones. Height gives the illusion of looking like more, so we pour less.

**Serve in the kitchen.** To discourage second helpings, pre-serve your portions onto each plate in the kitchen rather than bringing serving bowls to the dining table. Keeping the remaining food off the table makes it less likely you’ll reach for more.

**Shine a light on meals.** Atmosphere has an impact on how we eat. Studies show that dimmed lights at meals can make you eat more. In restaurants with soft lighting, for example, consumers tend to stay longer and maybe enjoy an unplanned dessert or an extra drink. Low lighting can also make you feel less inhibited and self-conscious; you’re more apt to eat more, especially when you’re with others. You can’t control conditions in a restaurant, but keep the lights bright at home and reserve candlelight dinners for special occasions.

**Don’t multitask.** Keep meals free of distractions: Don’t drive, watch TV, read, or engage in another activity while eating. Instead, find a quiet spot and just sit down and eat. Multitasking while eating makes it easy to consume more food without even realizing it. Focusing on your food, often called mindful eating, can help you enjoy meals and pay better attention to what you eat. (That goes for snacks, too.) If you’re on your feet, you’re not paying attention.

**Pace yourself.** Scientists have known for some time that the fullness of your stomach is only part of what makes you feel satisfied after a meal; the brain must also receive a series of signals from digestive hormones secreted by the gastrointestinal tract. It’s standard advice to chew slowly, so that you’ll feel full after eating less food than if you ate quickly. Eating slowly doesn’t always work, but when it does, the reason has as much to do with the brain as with the gut.

As the stomach fills with food or water, stretch receptors in the stomach activate and signal the brain directly through the vagus nerve, which connects the gut and the brainstem. Then, as partially digested food enters the small intestine, hormonal signals are released. One example is cholecystokinin (CCK), released by the intestines in response to food consumed during a meal.

---

**Quick tip** Make your own easy pasta sauce:

Sauté garlic, onions, and green peppers in 1 teaspoon olive oil. Add a can of low-sodium crushed tomatoes. Eat over whole-wheat pasta.
Another hormone, leptin, produced by fat cells, communicates with the brain about long-range needs and satiety, based on the body’s energy stores. Research suggests that leptin amplifies the CCK signals to enhance the feeling of fullness. Other research suggests that leptin also interacts with the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brain to produce a feeling of pleasure after eating. The theory is that, by eating too quickly, you might not give this intricate hormonal cross-talk system enough time to work.

Of course, as anyone who has tried eating slowly to lose weight can attest, it’s not quite that simple. People who are obese, for example, may suffer from leptin resistance, meaning that they’re less responsive to satiety or pleasure signals from this hormone. Appetite is complex, and dieting is a challenge. Even so, it’s worth taking time to savor the texture, flavor, and aroma of your food.

To slow yourself down, make a habit of taking one mindful bite at the beginning of each meal, which acts like an eating speed bump. Tune into the taste, texture, and smell of that bite. Put your fork down and chew it slowly. These steps can help put the brakes on your eating velocity, which in turn will give your brain a chance to receive the message that your stomach is full. When you feel full, stop eating.

**Outwit your appetite at restaurants**

In general, restaurant food isn’t as healthful as food you prepare using the healthy eating guidelines. For one thing, it’s more likely to be high in unhealthy fats, salt, sugar, and refined carbohydrates. It’s not obvious, but butter is in almost everything in many restaurants—chefs like the flavor and are trained to use it liberally, even on those healthy-looking fresh vegetables. The same goes for salt and sugar. Plus, restaurant portions are often overly large. However, if you’re smart about what you order, you can get a healthful meal—including dessert—when eating out. Here are some guidelines.

**DINNER GROUND RULES**

- Plan your dinners for the week and try to eat at home more often. Remember to start from where you are now and cut back gradually. If you’re eating out five nights a week, try to eat at home three nights.
- Take control of restaurant meals by looking for dishes that come with lots of vegetables, lean proteins, and only small portions of white starches like pasta, rice, and bread. Don’t eat everything on your plate. Bring some home.
- Practice portion control at home, too, and be sure to pile at least half your plate with vegetables.

**Check the restaurant’s website before leaving the house.** Many restaurants now show their menus online. Some even list nutrition information. You might be surprised by the high calorie and sodium content in some foods you thought were healthful. You can also check menus at websites such as [www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com).

In general, menus don’t tell you very much about an item’s nutritional value, but they can give you a general idea of the type of food served (meat with creamy sauces or fish with vegetables?). Knowing what to order ahead of time can give you more control. If you didn’t have a chance to check the menu before you got to the restaurant, you can always use your smartphone (if you have one) to do it. Also, go to restaurants that offer plenty of options à la carte.

**Outsmart entrée envy.** When you’re eating out with others, be the first to order so you’re not influenced by what everyone else is choosing. You can be enticed by other people’s food decisions. If everyone is indulging in the prime rib and twice-baked potatoes, for example, you’re less likely to order the grilled fish. Conversely, if you set a healthier tone by ordering a salad and salmon for your entrée first, others may follow suit.

**Start with a salad or a broth-based soup.** In general, eating in courses isn’t the best strategy if you’re trying to lose weight, because it can lead to consuming more calories. Conversely, seeing all the food together gives you a better appreciation of your food intake. Here’s an exception: studies show that starting a meal with a small salad and low-calorie dressing such as vinegar and oil or a broth-based soup can help curb your appetite, causing you to eat less at the meal. Before ordering a salad as a starter, ask what type of lettuce is used. If it’s iceberg rather than a dark green leafy lettuce such as romaine or arugula, take a pass or order the consommé instead.

**Ask about fried foods.** Frying usually adds more fat to a food than broiling, baking, or sautéing, so the
The calorie count is likely to be high. The good news is that many restaurants are switching away from frying foods in unhealthy oils. In fact, some cities and states are banning the use of trans fats in restaurants. You still want to ask your server what kind of oil is used for frying, and beware of the high calorie count of all fried foods.

- **Ask for extra vegetables.** Many restaurant entrées don’t come with a generous serving of vegetables. But you can easily remedy that by ordering vegetables from the side dish selection, substituting vegetables or a salad for a less healthful side dish, or asking for more vegetables. Many Chinese restaurants, for example, can easily accommodate your request to add extra broccoli or pea pods to your entrée.

- **Avoid dishes prepared with gravy and heavy sauces.** Or ask the waiter to use half the sauce. Because gravy is often made with fatty pan drippings from meat, it’s relatively high in saturated fat. Many sauces are made with cream, which is also high in saturated fat.

- **Ask the waiter how large the entrées are.** If they’re bigger than the meals you usually eat, consider ordering an appetizer instead or sharing an entrée with someone else. And keep in mind that you don’t have to eat everything on your plate. Try eating only half the portion and taking the rest home for tomorrow’s lunch.

- **Share desserts.** If you want a sweet dessert, consider sharing it with others at your table. You’ll get the full taste, but just a fraction of the calories, sugar, and unhealthy fats. You can also order the fruit plate—or skip dessert and just sip coffee or tea.

### Outwit your appetite at parties

Food at parties and receptions can be decadent, so look for the most healthful offerings. Start with the vegetable plate. Is there a yogurt dip? Go for it. Many parties offer a fruit plate or fruit salad. Shrimp cocktail is a good choice, as are some of the items on a Middle Eastern platter like the hummus and tabbouleh. Unfortunately, the puff-pastry hors d’oeuvres, mini quiches, meatballs, and most fancy desserts are full of unhealthy fats, salt, and sugar, so steer clear or just sample one.

One good way to control consumption at a party is to put just two items on your plate and move away from the food table to eat. When you’re finished, avoid the food and go get a drink of seltzer or another non-caloric beverage to space out the time between trips to the buffet.

### A drink with dinner?

Research finds that people who drink alcohol moderately have lower rates of aging-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and dementia. There’s no need to start drinking if you don’t now, but if you already do, the key is moderation. Excessive alcohol consumption can raise your risk of a host of health problems, including liver disease, some cancers, high blood pressure, depression, and dementia. “Moderate” means no more than two drinks per day for men, and one drink per day for women. Drinking several drinks on one night doesn’t “average out” for the rest of the week.

Here’s another reason to curb excess drinking. Like other beverages, alcoholic drinks can be a caloric blind spot for many people—they add plenty of calories but are often overlooked in daily tallies. A 12-ounce glass of beer has about 150 calories (the

---

**Quick tip** Many people watch TV from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. each night. Studies show that TV viewing is associated with increased body weight in both kids and adults. Instead, get up and take a walk or a bike ride. Or try an indoor activity like playing Wii or doing a yoga video.

---

**Lunch on leftovers**

While you’re writing your dinner shopping list for the week, think about making dinners that leave enough leftovers for one or two lunches. Cook enough roasted chicken, for example, for a Monday dinner and to have in different guises for lunch on Tuesday and Thursday. Chop the chicken and mix in fruit and a handful of nuts, then layer this over a salad, stuff it into a whole-wheat pita, or roll it into a whole-grain wrap. Or slice chicken and add a few slices of avocado, tomato, sprouts, and pesto to whole-grain bread for a great sandwich. Round out lunch with a piece of fruit and grape tomatoes or some crunchy carrot, celery, or jicama sticks.
same as a can of non-diet soda). A 5-ounce glass of wine, a 1.5-ounce shot of distilled liquor, and a glass of light beer each contain about 100 calories. Mixed drinks can contain hundreds of calories per glass, since they often contained sweetened liquids as well as alcohol. The bottom line: when ordering a drink, keep it simple and small, and steer clear of the sweet drinks.

**Healthful dinner shopping list**
At this point, you probably have plenty of healthful food in the house, so this week, it's time to create your own shopping list based on what you already have on hand and a little time planning meals you want to make at home this week. You can begin with the “Smart, easy dinners” on page 29 or use the recipes at the end of this report. Even better, adapt recipes you know or those you find in cookbooks to meet the healthy eating guidelines in this report. Start your list here or use a separate piece of paper.

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
Sensible snacking

Snacking sneaks up on you. It’s midafternoon, you’re starving, and you need some energy to get you through a presentation in the afternoon, the emails you need to send, and the half-hour commute home. You know that nothing in the office vending machines can be good for you, but the chocolate bar, bag of cookies, or bag of chips would be quick, easy, and filling.

Or, you’re at home and the big slab of gourmet cheese left over from guests last weekend is calling from the refrigerator, too tempting to resist even though you ate lunch only two hours ago.

Because snacks are unplanned, they can easily erode your healthy eating goals. But it doesn’t have to be that way. In spite of what all the high-calorie, high-sugar, or high-sodium processed food options suggest, a snack can be a good-for-you experience. Depending on what you choose, snacks can be a source of healthful nutrients.

Snacking is not a necessary part of a healthy eating program. Still, many people find it hard not to have a snack sometime between lunch at noon and dinner at 6 p.m. A healthful snack can help sustain your energy levels by stabilizing your blood sugar, the fuel required by your body’s cells. When blood sugar dips, which can happen if you don’t eat about every four hours, you may feel tired.

Snacks can also increase your energy and endurance levels during a workout. If you eat a snack that offers a healthful combination of carbohydrates, protein, and some fat one hour before your workout, you’ll have more energy available during exercise and you won’t dip into your glycogen reserves (carbohydrates stored in muscles) as quickly for energy. The result? You’ll get a better workout as well as more energy for activities later in the day. It’s also a good idea to eat a snack with carbohydrates and protein within 30 minutes after a long aerobic workout (one that lasts 60 minutes or more). Refueling helps to repair muscle and replaces muscle glycogen stores so you won’t feel spent the next day.

It’s no secret that popular snacks often contain exactly the kinds of foods that put you at risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, stroke, and other life-threatening conditions. Plus snacking can lead to weight gain if you’re not careful. Research suggests that the more eating opportunities you have beyond three daily meals, the more calories you’ll consume. A Harvard study published in *Obesity* that followed over 20,000 men for more than a decade found that the men who snacked were at increased risk of weight gain, specifically an 11-pound gain over the 10-year testing period. Other studies have found that diets high in snack food are associated with an increased waist circumference and weight gain over time.

Unlike meals, snacks are often casual and unplanned. It’s easy to see how sneaky snack calories can be. For example, just one blueberry cereal bar, at 120 calories, can add up to an extra 12.5 pounds in a year if you have one every day over and above your basic calorie needs. And that’s the problem. If you snack, you may not compensate for those calories by eating less at the next meal.

**Setting goals for snacking success**

Your goal this week is to keep a detailed snacking diary to determine how much you are snacking and what you can do to improve your snacking choices, if necessary. To pinpoint your patterns, keep track of your snacking habits for three days (two weekdays and one weekend day) using the detailed one-day snack diary on the next page. (You’ll need three copies.) Note the time you’re snacking, where you’re snacking, with whom you’re eating, what else you’re doing while snacking, how you feel, whether you’re hungry, what you ate and how much, and how you feel after-
## YOUR SNACKING DIARY

Print 3 copies of this page and track your snacking patterns for three days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>WITH WHOM</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MOOD</th>
<th>HUNGER</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>SNACK FOOD</th>
<th>CALORIES</th>
<th>FULLNESS</th>
<th>FILLED OUT JUST BEFORE OR AFTER EATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(start and end time of the snack)</td>
<td>(kitchen, living room, bedroom, car, desk at work)</td>
<td>(alone, or with family, friends, colleagues)</td>
<td>(reading, watching TV, talking, cooking)</td>
<td>(neutral, happy, tense, depressed, angry, bored, rushed, tired)</td>
<td>(0–5, with 0=no hunger, 5=starving)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(after eating: 1=still hungry 2=quite satisfied 3=uncomfortable)</td>
<td>(X=yes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL:
ward. Track calories as well. Then, look at the big picture. Are you typically snacking when you’re not really hungry? When you’re stressed? When you’re doing something else? What are you eating? Do you tend to reach for the same kinds of snack foods at the same time each day? How many calories are you consuming? Is it more than you thought in relation to your overall calorie needs? Write your answers here:

Next, take a stand on snacking. If you’re trying to establish a pattern of healthy eating, use your snacking diary to decide if these extra foods are helping or hindering you. Unless you have diabetes or a health issue that requires you to eat every few hours, snacking isn’t necessary. Frequent snacking increases the chances of making poor food choices: a bag of chips can be had almost anywhere, unlike a piece of fresh fruit, which can be harder to put your hands on at a moment’s notice. If you think snacking could be holding you back from reaching your healthy eating goals, try avoiding snacking for a day and see how you feel. Did you miss snacking? Did avoiding snacking for a day help you eat less or stick to more healthful foods? Do you plan to curtail or avoid snacking in the future? Write your answers here:

If you think you can handle an occasional snack or feel you can’t make it from lunch to dinner without a little sustenance, take a hard look at what you’re munching on between meals. Are the snacks you’re consuming unprocessed or minimally processed (as in fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds)? Low in sodium (less than 300 mg per serving)? Around 150 calories or fewer per snack? Are you eating them at the right time, such as before and after your workouts? Have you gotten into bad habits such as eating an unnecessary snack every night before bed? What could you do to improve your snacking habits? Write your answers here:

Looking at your answers, what goal will you set for yourself for snacking? What do you have to do to achieve it? Remember to be as specific and as realistic as possible when planning how to accomplish your goal. If your aim, for example, is to eat more fruit for snacks, ask yourself why you haven’t been doing it already. Maybe you need to add more fruit to your grocery list. Are leftover foods from entertaining a problem? Consider giving them to guests as they leave the house or simply throwing them out if you know they are not good for you to have around. Get rid of the foods that tempt you—no one needs that store-bought cookie dough, including your children or grandchildren.

For my snack goal this week, I will…
Example: This week, on the weekend, I’ll plan ahead and buy 2 quarts of fresh strawberries from the farmer’s market, then wash and bag them so I’ll have a week’s worth of grabbable snacks.

Smarter snacks
It’s easy to see that many common snack foods like chips, cookies, doughnuts, and candy bars are not healthful choices. But many snack foods marketed as healthful, organic, or natural are just as unhealthful. Bran muffins masquerade as healthful even when they are packed with butter and sugar. The same goes for cereal bars and energy bars. Other foods such as fruit leather, yogurt raisins, and organic candies sold in health-food sections also hold out a deceitful hand, pretending to be healthful but are really packed with added sugar and excess calories. Fat-free chips and sweet snacks typically have lots of calories, salt, and sugar, and few vitamins or minerals. And an organic chocolate chip cookie is still a high-calorie, sugary cookie.

Eating these foods occasionally won’t hurt, but a habit can take its toll. Glycemic load is a measure of how much a food will cause your blood sugar to rise and then dip. It takes into account both the quantity of carbohydrates in the food as well as how fast they can raise blood sugar. Foods with a high glycemic load won’t keep you feeling full for very long and eating them often causes you to run the risk of overeating, gain-
ing weight, and possibly developing insulin resistance down the road. The same is true if you snack regularly on crackers and pretzels, normally made from refined flours. Additionally, foods with high sodium content can raise blood pressure, and foods with unhealthy fats contribute to heart disease and diabetes.

What should you snack on?
Try keeping a bunch of grapes or a tangerine handy. This way, you’ll see it before reaching for the calorie-dense chips or cookies. Have small containers of non-fat plain yogurt or applesauce with no added sugar within easy reach.

Bring peeled orange wedges to work. Keep a bowl of cut-up seasonal fruit in the fridge. Fresh fruits contain plenty of vitamins and fiber. Also, try unsalted nuts, such as almonds, walnuts, peanuts, cashews, hazelnuts, and filberts, or roasted pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds. They contain many beneficial nutrients and other substances, including vitamin E, folic acid, protein, potassium, and fiber. Although some are high in fat, the fat is healthy because it’s mainly unsaturated. See Table 5, at right, for more ideas.

Mix it up
The most healthful snacks have more than one macronutrient (protein, fat, carbohydrate). With a handful of whole-grain crackers (carbohydrate), for example, have some low-fat cheese (protein, fat). The mix of carbohydrates, protein, and fat is more satiating than straight carbohydrates. If you want to eat chips, look for brands that are unsalted or low in salt, free of trans fat, and made with unsaturated vegetable oils such as safflower, canola, sunflower, or peanut.

Snacking strategies
Snacks can be a source of healthful nutrients without adding an overdose of calories, salt, fats, and sugars to your diet if you follow these suggestions.

If you choose to snack, limit your snack calories to around 150 or fewer per snack. And make your snacks low in sodium (less than 200 mg of sodium per serving) and low in any added sugar (less than 3 g per serving).

Home in on hunger. Before you snack, ask yourself, “Am I hungry?” Many of us misidentify emotions, such as stress and fatigue, and call them hunger. If the answer is yes (your stomach feels hollow, your head is achy), make sure you’re not confusing hunger with thirst. Drink an 8-ounce glass of water; then wait 10 to 15 minutes. If you’re still hungry, go ahead and have a healthful snack.

If the answer is no (you’re not hungry), attack cravings from a psychological level. You might be able to talk yourself out of a snack attack. Ask yourself how you’re feeling. Lonely? Bored? Stressed? Try to understand what’s really going on. Then, ask yourself the bigger question: will food fix what I need? The answer is always no. Eating pasta, for example, won’t give you more time to get a project at work done. Then go for a walk around the block, do a few stretching exercises, put on some music, or distract yourself in another way.

Then, if you still want the food, fine. Ask yourself what food you really want. Then eat only a small amount, and make it good. If you’re craving chocolate, for example, eat one small square and savor it. It’s important that you snack on what you’re craving rather than denying it. Eating around a craving may only cause you to eat more because the craving isn’t satisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Snacks that satisfy</th>
<th>Calories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup edamame (soybean in the pod)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ounce low-fat cheese with ½ cup grapes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup vegetable sticks with 2 tablespoons of hummus</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup low-fat cottage cheese with ½ cup fruit or vegetables</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ small whole-wheat tortilla with two slices of turkey, tomato, and avocado</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English muffin pizza: ½ whole-wheat English muffin with 2 tablespoons tomato sauce, ½ ounce low-fat shredded cheese and a few green pepper strips</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ounces plain nonfat yogurt with ½ cup berries</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ounce unsalted nuts (almonds, filberts, peanuts, or soy nuts)</td>
<td>160–180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Control your portion. Rather than mindlessly munching from a box of animal crackers, have something that's calorie-contained by design, like a piece of fruit or a cup of nonfat plain yogurt. To keep a snack from turning into a meal's worth of calories, avoid handfuls of anything. Rather than randomly dipping into the rice cakes at your desk or a cereal box in front of the TV, give yourself a serving. Then put the rest away before you start to eat. When possible, buy snacks in single-serving containers, and divide bulk snacks into individual sandwich bags with about 100 calories each. A study published in *Obesity* in 2011 found that participants who were given four 100-calorie packages of crackers while watching TV ate 25% less than those given one 400-calorie package, and the effect was strongest among overweight individuals.

Manage unplanned snacking. The mere sight of food you frequently cross paths with, such as the office goodie jar or that box of crackers on your kitchen counter, can stimulate your appetite. To thwart an unplanned snack session, keep cereal, crackers, and cookies hidden in a top cabinet. Also, wrap leftovers in aluminum foil, not plastic wrap, so you won't see them and be tempted when opening the refrigerator. At work, store treats (fruit is the exception) in covered containers, preferably in a distant office refrigerator, not on your desk. You'll eat even less if it takes effort, such as having to reach or take a walk to access food. If the communal goodie jar is someone else's, offer to fill it, but with treats you don't like. Or go out of your way, if you have to, to avoid walking by the goodie jar or the break room on your way to the copy machine, for example.
Keep it going

Over the past five weeks, you’ve gained an awareness of your eating habits and started making more healthful choices and putting your knowledge into practice by getting organized. Congratulations! Chances are, you’re eating and enjoying more healthful meals, controlling your portions, and generally consuming more fruits and vegetables and whole grains. How are you doing? It’s time to take stock.

The big picture

By now, you may have several specific goals you’re working on in relation to breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacking. How well are you managing to address each one? To find out how far you’ve come, keep another three-day food record (two weekdays and one weekend day), using the food diary. It may feel like going back to the drawing board, but tracking your eating again can help you assess your progress and fine-tune your overall plan.

After doing another three-day food record, compare it to your old record from five weeks ago. Then ask yourself: Where have I made the most progress with diet change? What do I still need to tweak? What’s working? What’s not? Did I make progress toward my goals?

Assess your goals

Did you discover other goals you’d like to set? Restate your goals and note how well you’ve been doing:

Goal 1 progress:

___________________________________________
___________________________________________

Goal 2 progress:

___________________________________________
___________________________________________

Goal 3 progress:

___________________________________________
___________________________________________

Figure 6 What’s available? Then and now

Staying on track isn’t easy when faced with a constant onslaught of unhealthy choices. It’s interesting to see that the availability of sugary foods in stores, restaurants, and other places has increased by 14% since 1970. The availability of flour and cereal-based foods has increased by 45%. But the availability of vegetables has decreased slightly.

New goals:

Food policies for the future
Next, it’s time to move beyond goals and set your own food policies: a personal set of rules to live by based on your knowledge and experience about what works for you. Take a look at your answers and formulate some specific food behavior policies for the future. They should reflect what you’ve learned about yourself and your eating habits over this past month and how you’re going to behave going forward. You can have as many food policies in relation to healthy eating as you want. To give you an idea, here are several examples of food policies that might be appropriate:

- “I will plan menus and shop for food every Saturday so I have healthful options on hand for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the week.”
- “I’m no longer going to snack. From now on, I’ll eat three meals and that’s it.” Or “I will limit my snacking to two 150-calorie snacks per day.”
- “I will no longer eat while I’m driving, no matter how hungry I am.”
- “I will always eat breakfast before leaving the house in the morning.”
- “I will bring lunch with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to work three out of five days a week.”
- “I will use part of my lunch hour to walk every day.”
- “I will have fresh fruit for dessert—not ice cream, pie, or cake.”
- “I will not eat while watching TV.”

Your food policies can be general, but typically, being specific is more helpful, so feel free to be exact. For example, if you eat out often for work and can’t avoid it because it’s part of your job, you could develop several ironclad restaurant behavior policies designed to control calories that reflect the type of restaurant you’re frequenting, for example: “I will always order a vegetable, even if it means ordering an extra side dish or asking the chef to add vegetables to the entree.”

No matter what your food policies are, they should be consistent and repeatable, and they should take into account what’s most important to you. If you really love dessert, for example, one of your food policies should reflect that. To increase the chances you’ll remember and stick with it, review your policies from time to time, such as before going out to eat. Take the time to record your food policies here or on another piece of paper. Remember, writing them down makes them real.

My food policies:
Example: From now on, I will substitute an apple for chips at lunch.

Keep up the good work
Now you’re really creating a new way of eating that you enjoy and can stick with for life. Here are steps to help you reinforce your new habits.

- Reward yourself. In addition to your food policies, be sure to fortify your motivation by rewarding yourself frequently. Behavior change is hard work because habits are so ingrained. By the time you’re 40, you’ve eaten some 40,000 meals—and probably lots of snacks. The most successful people reward themselves for following their food policies, especially in the first six months they’re implementing them.

- After a week of cooking at home three out of five weeknights, for example, you could acknowledge your progress by treating yourself to something you’ve been wanting, like a piece of clothing or some new music. Also, recognize other ways the changes you’re making are benefiting your life. If cooking at home more often is saving you money, for example, once a week, you could put the money you didn’t spend on eating out into a clear tip jar for a vacation, and then watch your rewards mount.

- Find a workaround. While you’re at it, try to control your environment so old behaviors don’t tempt you. If you’re trying to break the fast-food habit, try driving a different route that doesn’t take you through the fast-food district. If you want to eat a healthful breakfast, put an apple on the kitchen table before you go to bed. Find a healthy substitute for any behaviors you’re trying to eliminate. That might be, for example, taking swigs from your water bottle instead of opting for your usual 3 p.m. cola or sugar fix.
• Don’t give up when you slip up. Once you put your food policies into action, realize that there will be times when you lapse into old behaviors. You’re human. It will happen, and when it does, don’t fall prey to thinking, “Well, I ate out every night this week, I might as well give up on the idea of cooking. It’s just not happening.” That’s demotivating and counterproductive.

• Instead, use the suffering that’s associated with the slip as a learning opportunity so you can avoid it in the future. Ask yourself: What caused it? Was it something practical—such as having an especially busy week? Or was it something emotional, such as feeling stressed about work? Once you think you know what caused the slip, let it go and forgive yourself. Then get right back to your new routine. A slip doesn’t need to become a fall. A lapse doesn’t need to become a relapse. On the days you do follow through, pat yourself on the back. Just one day of making healthful food and physical activity choices—such as not having doughnuts when someone brings them into the office and taking a brisk walk at lunch—can boost your enthusiasm and self-esteem.

• Finally, strengthen your resolve by seeking emotional encouragement from a support group or a network of friends. The help they provide can be a powerful motivator and make you feel accountable to someone. If you have other people watching your progress, you’ll be less ready to break that commitment. If you feel you need the support of a professional, consider working with a registered dietitian. To find one in your area, visit www.eatright.org.

Enlist your friends and family

Even if you’re an independent person, you’re more likely to succeed if you are surrounded by people who encourage you. Research finds that eating patterns are transmitted through social relationships, particularly between spouses. Despite your best intentions, it’s not easy to eat healthfully if you have family or friends who prefer a steady diet of burgers and fries. But often the people around you need a little support themselves. The changes you’re making could indirectly affect them, and they may not want to change along with you.

To keep everyone on your side, you’ll need to turn any negativity they may unwittingly toss your way into positive support. These strategies—designed to address some of the most important people in your life—can help you do just that.

Your spouse and your kids. You’re a powerful role model to your family. Begin by sharing some of the tastier healthful treats you are eating. Cut up a bowl of pineapple and offer it around. Make some healthy tortilla roll-ups for lunch (see “What’s for lunch?” page 23). Put out unsalted nuts and sunflower seeds for snacks. Next, begin introducing more healthful meals that play to their preferences. If they love meat and potatoes, buy and prepare lower-fat cuts of meat that you can eat too. Then balance the meal with plenty of vegetables. Serving a salad and peas and carrots not only gives you plenty of good stuff to fill up on, it helps educate your family’s palate. Whether they’ll actually eat the vegetables is not the point (your kids may not gobble them up—at least at first). All you can do is expose them to healthful foods and hope they’ll try them eventually. If you can’t refuse your child’s desperate cries for cheese crackers, buy 100-calorie packages, so you won’t have an open bag around. Or look for more healthful, low-calorie versions of snacks you both can feel good about eating.

Respect the adjustment process. In time, your family may take to eating some of your more healthful foods. Instead of acting as if these foods are designated as “yours,” allow your family to embrace the change.

Meanwhile, make realistic requests. Tell your spouse or partner exactly what you want: keep the bags of chips out of the house, for example, or ask your spouse or partner to join you for a walk after dinner. The more realistic your requests, the better. A couch potato isn’t likely to run a marathon with you.

Your friends. Friends can be tremendously supportive in helping you follow your food policies. They can also unwittingly work against you. In fact, their influence is more powerful than you might think. With weight control, for example, if you have friends, even friends of friends, whose weight is on the upswing, your chances of piling on the pounds yourself increases by 57%, according to a Harvard study published in the New England Journal of Medicine. We’re influenced by the behaviors of those around us, and when more people you know gain weight or have unhealthy diets, the behavior becomes acceptable, much like any social norm. If you want to maintain or lose weight, be aware of how your friends’ behavior might influence you, and seek out people with similar goals. You can be a healthy influence on your friends, too, by inviting them to the gym to try out a new class or asking them over for a healthy dinner.
Cooking kickoff: Recipes for success

The simple act of preparing your own meals automatically starts you on the road to healthy eating. Because you’re the head chef, you can incorporate many of the principles set forth in this report, such as eating more fruits and vegetables and whole grains and consuming less salt and added sugar.

With a little planning, it’s surprising how little time cooking actually takes—planning being the operative word. Ideally, you’ll want to have ideas about what you’ll be eating for several days ahead, and then have the ingredients on hand from which to work. As you begin to cook more, it gets easier. You can streamline the process by batching recipes so you’ll have your own ready supply of frozen dinners and take other healthful shortcuts. The simple and delicious recipes that follow can help you kick off your cooking skills and begin to build a repertoire of healthful meals you can turn to again and again. Bon appétit.

Appetizers

Crostini with goat cheese and fresh tomato

Crostini—thin slices of whole-wheat toasted baguette topped with cheese and vegetables—tastes complex, yet it’s simple to make and a good use of in-season tomatoes, if they’re available.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole-wheat baguette, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped (or 2 teaspoons dried)
- 6 ounces goat cheese (chèvre)
- about 3 plum tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375° F. Brush baguette slices lightly with about 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and toast in the oven until lightly browned, about 10 minutes.

In a medium skillet, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and sauté the garlic, rosemary, and thyme for 1 minute. Remove from heat and transfer to a medium bowl. Add goat cheese and mix well. Spread the goat cheese mixture lightly on the toasted baguette slices; garnish with the chopped tomatoes.

Nutrition facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servings: 15</th>
<th>Serving size: 1 piece</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tasty tzatziki (Mediterranean yogurt-cucumber dip) with pita bread

Tzatziki, a refreshing yogurt sauce, is delicious on pita bread, as a dip for fresh vegetables, or as a sauce for grilled vegetables, fish, or chicken. In addition to being versatile, it’s low in calories and a flavorful source of calcium.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled and seeded
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups plain, nonfat Greek-style yogurt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons snipped chives or dill
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 loaf whole-wheat pita bread, cut in wedges

**DIRECTIONS**

Grate the cucumber and place in a sieve over a bowl in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Discard any liquid that drains from the cucumber. Preheat oven to 375° F. In a small bowl, mix the cucumbers, salt, pepper, yogurt, garlic, herbs, and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Taste for seasoning. Set aside.

Lay the pita on a baking sheet and drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Bake until golden, about 20 minutes. Serve the baked pita with the dip.

---

Classic caponata

Serve this Sicilian-inspired sweet-and-sour eggplant salad as an antipasto with whole-grain bread, or as a side dish, warm or at room temperature.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 4 medium eggplants, cut into bite-sized cubes
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 8 ripe red tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
- ¼ cup green olives, pitted
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- pepper to taste
- 2 small whole-wheat baguettes (about 8 ounces each), each sliced into 8 pieces
- For topping/garnish:
  - ¼ cup almonds, chopped or slivered
  - about ¼ cup parsley, chopped

**DIRECTIONS**

Place the eggplant in a colander; sprinkle with salt and set aside for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a saucepan; add the onion and celery. Cook for 5 minutes until soft but not brown. Add the tomatoes and cook for 15 more minutes until pulpy. Add the capers, olives, vinegar, sugar, and pepper and cook for another 15 minutes.

Rinse and pat the eggplant dry. In a large saucepan, sauté the eggplant in the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat until softened and light brown. Stir the eggplant into the sauce. Let stand for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavors to develop before serving.

Assemble by dividing the mixture evenly on the baguette slices. Top with the almonds and parsley.

---

**Nutrition facts**

**Tasty tzatziki (Mediterranean yogurt-cucumber dip) with pita bread**

- Servings: 8
- Serving size: 4 tablespoons dip and ½ pita
- Calories: 96
- Protein (g): 6.6
- Carbohydrate (g): 9.2
- Fiber (g): 1.4
- Fat (g): 3.7
- Saturated fat (g): 0.5
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 0
- Sodium (mg): 209

**Classic caponata**

- Servings: 16
- Serving size: 1 baguette piece with caponata mixture
- Calories: 129
- Protein (g): 4
- Carbohydrate (g): 22
- Fiber (g): 6
- Fat (g): 3
- Saturated fat (g): < 1
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 0
- Sodium (mg): 176
### Tuna salad with curry and apples

Apples and curry sweeten and spice up this traditional sandwich filler. Prepare tuna salad at the beginning of the week and refrigerate until ready to use.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 (5-ounce) can solid white tuna (packed in water, low-sodium), drained
- 1 tablespoon low-fat mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- ½ cup apple, chopped
- 1 tablespoon onion, chopped

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine ingredients in a bowl and mix.

**Nutrition facts**
- Servings: 2
- Serving size: ¾ cup
- Calories: 198
- Protein (g): 22
- Carbohydrate (g): 15
- Fiber (g): 2
- Fat (g): 6
- Saturated fat (g): 3
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 39
- Sodium (mg): 237

### Multitasker’s sautéed chicken breasts with roasted garlic sauce

Made for multitaskers, this chicken can marinate during the day while you’re off doing something else.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 4 (4-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary plus 5 rosemary sprigs
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup low-sodium chicken stock
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 garlic clove, minced, plus 1 large garlic bulb

**DIRECTIONS**
Marinate chicken breasts in 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, 2 tablespoons rosemary, and minced garlic for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 350° F. Slice off the top of the garlic bulb and lightly sprinkle it with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Roast garlic for about 1 hour, or until soft and golden brown. Set aside to cool, about 10 minutes. (This step can also be done ahead.) When garlic has cooled, squeeze out garlic pulp and mash with a fork; set aside.

Sauté chicken in a non-stick pan for a couple of minutes on each side. Put in baking pan and bake at 350° F for about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, heat wine, 1 sprig of fresh rosemary, mashed roasted garlic, and chicken stock. Add salt and pepper. Leave on high heat until sauce thickens. Strain through fine sieve. Place 1 chicken breast on each plate and pour sauce over chicken. Garnish with rosemary sprigs.

**Nutrition facts**
- Servings: 4
- Serving size: 1 chicken breast
- Calories: 232
- Protein (g): 24.5
- Carbohydrate (g): 3.5
- Fiber (g): 0.2
- Fat (g): 10.1
- Saturated fat (g): 1.7
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 73
- Sodium (mg): 283
Bean and lentil soup

Make this soup on the weekends for the week ahead or the same day. Though it’s quick to prepare, it tastes like you spent hours.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 15 ounces cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup green lentils
- 1 cup fresh carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon crumbled bay leaf
- 2 fresh tomatoes, chopped
- black pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS**

In a 5- or 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the oil. Cook onion in hot oil over medium heat until tender, stirring occasionally.

Add broth, beans, lentils, carrots, and celery. Bring to boiling. Add oregano, basil, thyme, and bay leaf. Reduce heat. Simmer, covered, 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir in tomatoes. Remove from heat. Season with black pepper.

**Nutrition facts**

- **Servings:** 6
- **Serving size:** 1 cup
- **Calories:** 194
- **Protein (g):** 11
- **Carbohydrate (g):** 36
- **Fiber (g):** 9
- **Fat (g):** 1.4
- **Saturated fat (g):** 0.1
- **Trans fat (g):** 0
- **Cholesterol (mg):** 0
- **Sodium (mg):** 200

Healthy turkey meatloaf

Ground turkey is a delicious alternative to ground beef, with less fat and fewer calories. Feel free to use ground turkey breast rather than regular ground turkey in this recipe to save even more fat and calories.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 medium red onion, diced fine
- 4 ribs celery, washed and diced fine
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 medium Granny Smith apples, cored and diced fine with skin left on
- 3 slices of whole-wheat bread, broken into crumbs
- ¾ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2½ teaspoons poultry seasoning
- 2 whole eggs
- ¼ cup skim milk
- 1 pound ground turkey

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat oven to 350° F and grease a 9-inch loaf pan.

In a pan, sauté the onion and celery in the canola oil until slightly soft, and add the apple pieces; cook on low heat for 6 minutes, then let this mixture cool.

In a large bowl, mix together the bread crumbs, cheese, poultry seasoning, eggs, milk, cooled apple mixture, and turkey for no more than 2 minutes to keep it from getting tough. Place into greased pan and cook in the center of the oven for 45 minutes or until the center is cooked through.

**Nutrition facts**

- **Servings:** 8
- **Serving size:** ¼ loaf
- **Calories:** 238
- **Protein (g):** 18.8
- **Carbohydrate (g):** 12.3
- **Fiber (g):** 2.1
- **Fat (g):** 13.7
- **Saturated fat (g):** 5.1
- **Trans fat (g):** 0.2
- **Cholesterol (mg):** 126
- **Sodium (mg):** 319
Sides and salads

**Carrot and squash sauté**

Pear-shaped with smooth or prickly light green skin, chayote squash is native to Mexico. Feel free to substitute butternut or acorn squash if chayote isn’t available at your local supermarket or farmer’s market.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 3 fresh carrots, peeled
- ¼ cup green onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ pounds fresh chayote squash, peeled and cut into julienne strips
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- (or ¼ teaspoon dried crushed thyme)
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

**DIRECTIONS**

Blanch carrots in boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain and refresh under running cold water. Cut carrots into thin julienne strips.

In a large pan, sauté green onion in olive oil until soft. Add carrots, squash, garlic, and thyme. Cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 10 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice. Serve immediately.

**Nutrition facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving: 6</th>
<th>Serving size: ¾ cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tabbouleh salad**

If you’ve never tried bulgur (whole-grain wheat kernels), this refreshing salad offers a nice introduction.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup bulgur wheat, rinsed and drained
- 1½ cups cold water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups Italian (flat leaf) parsley, chopped
- 4 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 1 bunch scallions (about 6), minced
- ½ cup mint leaves, chopped
- 3 stalks celery, finely diced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 tablespoons lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

**DIRECTIONS**

Combine the bulgur and water in a small saucepan and season with salt. Bring to a boil, cover, and remove from heat and let sit for 15 minutes. Uncover and allow to cool.

Combine the remaining ingredients in a large serving bowl and toss well. Add bulgur and toss.

**Nutrition facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving: 4</th>
<th>Serving size: ¾ cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Greek couscous salad with walnuts**

This great-for-you salad can be made ahead and doled out daily. Whole-wheat couscous is a versatile food that’s a snap to prepare.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup whole-wheat couscous
- ½ cup red peppers, chopped
- ½ cup scallions or chives, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup black olives, diced
- ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1½ ounces feta cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

**DIRECTIONS**
In a large saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Add couscous and simmer for 8 minutes. Drain and cool. Add remaining ingredients. Toss and serve.

**Nutrition facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servings: 8</th>
<th>Serving size: ½ cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chickpea salad**

Chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, are a nutrient powerhouse. They’re loaded with protein, folate, and fiber as well as vitamin B₆, phosphorus, and iron.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 ripe tomatoes, halved, seeded, and chopped
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
- 4 basil leaves, julienned
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon capers
- Pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine the ingredients in a large bowl, toss, and serve.

**Nutrition facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servings: 2</th>
<th>Serving size: ½ cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lemon spinach**

It’s amazing how a little lemon and garlic can zest up vegetables. We use baby spinach here, but feel free to substitute broccoli rabe or another favorite leafy green.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 6 ounces baby spinach (about 3 large handfuls)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Pepper to taste
- ¼ teaspoon salt

**DIRECTIONS**
Put olive oil in a wok or 10-inch sauté pan. Add minced garlic. Cook on medium-high heat for 20 seconds. Add baby spinach to garlic and oil. Cook 2 to 3 minutes. Squeeze the lemon juice over the spinach while cooking. Add salt and pepper.

**Nutrition facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servings: 4</th>
<th>Serving size: ½ cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate (g)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat (g)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat (g)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans fat (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mg)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Simple fruit smoothie**

If you’ve got fruit around that needs to be eaten, by all means, whip up a smoothie for a nutritious dessert or snack.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup plain, nonfat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup orange juice
- ½ banana, cut into pieces
- ½ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup ice

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Pour into a glass and serve.

**Nutrition facts**
- Servings: 1
- Serving size: 12 ounces
- Calories: 310
- Protein (g): 21.7
- Carbohydrate (g): 56.5
- Fiber (g): 3.4
- Fat (g): 0.6
- Saturated fat (g): 0.1
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 0
- Sodium (mg): 87

---

**Pumpkin muffins**

These are much more healthful than the muffins you’ll find at a cafe or even at the grocery store. Still, note that they are under the dessert section, not the breakfast section.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 small ripe bananas (or 2 medium-large bananas)
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin purée
- 2 egg whites
- 1 whole egg
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1¼ cups oat bran
- ½ teaspoons baking soda
- ½ cup raisins (3 ounces)
- Olive oil cooking spray

**DIRECTIONS**
Preheat oven to 350° F. Purée bananas and pumpkin in blender or food processor. Add egg whites, whole egg, and applesauce, and purée until smooth. Add dry milk and pulse until blended. Add pumpkin pie spice to mixture and blend.

In separate bowl, combine flour, oat bran, baking soda, and raisins. Mix to combine. Add banana-pumpkin mixture to flour mixture and mix well.

Spray muffin pan with cooking spray and spoon mixture into cups, distributing batter evenly. Bake for 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted into muffin comes out clean.

**Nutrition facts**
- Servings: 12
- Serving size: 1 muffin
- Calories: 160
- Protein (g): 7.7
- Carbohydrate (g): 35
- Fiber (g): 5.6
- Fat (g): 1.8
- Saturated fat (g): 0.4
- Trans fat (g): 0
- Cholesterol (mg): 18.4
- Sodium (mg): 209
Resources

Organizations

American Dietetic Association
120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60606
800-877-1600
www.eatright.org

This large organization of food and nutrition professionals provides information and advice to the general public through its Web site, outreach efforts, and publications.

The Nutrition Source—Knowledge for Healthy Eating
Harvard School of Public Health
Department of Nutrition
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource

This Web site provides free public access to the latest information on nutrition and health.

Books and publications

Eat, Drink, and Weigh Less: A Flexible and Delicious Way to Shrink Your Waist Without Going Hungry
Mollie Katzen and Walter C. Willett, M.D.
(Hyperion, 2007)

This book teams Mollie Katzen, author of the landmark Moosewood Cookbook, with Dr. Walter Willett, head of the Harvard School of Public Health’s Department of Nutrition. Together they’ve created a weight-loss plan that’s easy to implement and filled with delicious foods and more than 100 fabulous recipes.

Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy: The Harvard Medical School Guide to Healthy Eating
Walter C. Willett, M.D., with P.J. Skerrett
(Simon & Schuster, 2005)

This book provides practical advice on eating for health based on proven scientific links between diet and health. An extensive selection of recipes helps readers put the latest nutrition findings into practice.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010
U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.dietaryguidelines.gov

This 95-page report from two federal agencies sets out practical guidelines for healthy eating based on the latest nutritional science. It is available online and in print.

Glossary

**body mass index (BMI):** An estimate of the body’s fat content, calculated from measurements of height and weight.

**cholecystokinin (CCK):** A hormone that aids digestion, released by the intestines in response to food consumed during a meal.

**dietary fiber:** The edible, nondigestible component of carbohydrates naturally found in plant food.

**glycemic load:** A measure of how much blood sugar rises in response to a serving of a specific food. Foods with a high glycemic load are thought to increase the risk of insulin resistance and other health problems. The glycemic load takes into account both the quantity of carbohydrates in the food as well as how fast they can raise blood sugar.

**hypertension:** High blood pressure, a condition that raises risk for heart attack and stroke, among other health problems.

**julienne:** To cut food into thin, matchstick strips.

**leptin:** A hormone produced by fat cells that acts on the brain to suppress appetite and burn stored fat.

**monounsaturated fats:** Beneficial fats found primarily in vegetable oils such as olive oil and canola oil.

**omega-3 fatty acids:** Beneficial fats also known as n-3 fatty acids. These are polyunsaturated fats in which the last double bond between carbon atoms is located three carbons from the end of the chain.

**polyunsaturated fats:** Beneficial fats found primarily in vegetable oils such as corn oil and soybean oil.

**saturated fats:** Unhealthy fats found primarily in animal products such as meat, butter, and dairy. Also found in palm and coconut oil.

**trans fatty acids (trans fats):** Unhealthy fats that occur naturally in meat but come mainly from processed foods made with hydrogenated oils. Hydrogenated oils are polyunsaturated fats that have been chemically altered to be made more like saturated fats.

**visceral fat:** Belly fat that lies beneath the abdominal wall, in the spaces surrounding the liver, intestines, and other organs.
Receive HEALTHbeat, Harvard Health Publications’ free email newsletter

Go to: www.health.harvard.edu to subscribe to HEALTHbeat. This free weekly email newsletter brings you health tips, advice, and information on a wide range of topics.

You can also join in discussion with experts from Harvard Health Publications and folks like you on a variety of health topics, medical news, and views by reading the Harvard Health Blog (www.health.harvard.edu/blog).

Order this report and other publications from Harvard Medical School

online | www.health.harvard.edu
phone | 877-649-9457 (toll free)
mail | Belvoir Media Group
     Attn: Harvard Health Publications
     P.O. Box 5656
     Norwalk, CT 06856-5656
bulk rate | licensing@belvoir.com

www.health.harvard.edu
877-649-9457 (toll free)

Other publications from Harvard Medical School

Special Health Reports
Harvard Medical School publishes in-depth reports on a wide range of health topics, including:

Addiction | Eye Disease
Alcohol | Foot Care
Allergies | Grief & Loss
Alzheimer’s Disease | Hair Loss (women’s)
Anxiety & Phobias | Hands
Arthritis | Headache
Back Pain | Hearing Loss
Balance | Heart Disease
Caregivers | Heart Disease & Diet
Change Made Easy | High Blood Pressure
Cholesterol | Immune System
Core Workout | Incontinence
Depression | Knees & Hips
Diabetes | Living Longer
Diabetes & Diet | Living Wills
Energy/Fatigue | Memory
Erectile Dysfunction | Neck & Shoulder Pain
Exercise | Nutrition
Exercise Your Joints | Osteoporosis

Pain Relief | Positive Psychology
Prostate Disease | Reducing Sugar & Salt
Sensitive Gut | Sexuality
Six-Week Eating Plan | Sleep
Skin Care | Strength Training
Stroke | Thyroid Disease
Virus | Vitamins & Minerals
Weight Loss | Women’s Health
Workout Workbook

Periodicals
Monthly Newsletters and annual publications including:

Harvard Health Letter | Harvard Heart Letter | Prostate Disease Annual
Harvard Women’s Health Watch | Harvard Men’s Health Watch