



WOMEN'S GUIDE

*Weight Loss
the Healthy Way*



**MOMMY
AUTHORITY**


Happy Mommy. Happy Family.



Women's Guide: Weight Loss the Healthy Way

Top tips for eating healthy foods to maintain your weight

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1. Using This Book As Your Guide

Maybe you've been on every diet known to womankind. Maybe you haven't found one you can stick with. Whatever your challenge is, this book can help you. In it, you'll learn exactly how to develop a personal weight loss strategy that will get you the results you crave. It's simple, it's easy, it works fast - and it can be the last diet you'll need, forever.

We all like to see immediate results, and so this [diet](#) is the right one for you. The plan works really quickly. If you start your diet in the morning, you'll be losing weight by lunch time. You'll lose more weight on this diet than if you rolled out of bed and ran 10 miles every morning. You're going to see a measurable difference in your waistline within 24-36 hours. It's the fastest, SAFEST diet in the world.


This is super-important though: **Our Women's Guide is not just a weight-loss diet, it's a diet for a healthy life.** Eating and being active in the way this book will show you is probably healthier than what you're now. With this diet, you're going to get healthier every single day you're on it. Isn't that a cool promise?

The hardest thing about being on a diet is always thinking about how deprived you are while you're doing it. When you're on a diet, you're in a world of constantly hearing "no, no, no". This diet starts working right away—and one of the best things is that you will probably forget you're on it,. You'll lose weight very fast, your energy will increase, and you can eat out whenever you like. The only time you'll know you're on a diet is when you have to weigh yourself.

The secret is that this diet encourages you to make a new habit for health. It's fun, and it changes every negative association you've had with a diet before. It's a simple shift, really, but it will make all the difference in the world.

Here's the recipe for success: make healthy changes, and stick with them.

The steps are:

- Take stock of what you eat and drink. This is our starting point—you are what you eat, after all.
 - Know what you should be eating and drinking (which is OFTEN totally different from what you are currently eating and drinking). Develop a personalized and healthy food plan for you. And only you.
 - Make smart, healthy choices—and stick with them. Everyone is different, and so what works for you will be what works for you. That's the secret sauce. Let's get started.
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2. Take Stock of What You Eat and Drink

Most of us know what we should be eating: healthy, fresh, whole foods. Dark greens, vegetables, lean proteins. But many of us eat to fill more than just hunger: we eat to relieve stress, for instance, or to reward ourselves for a long day. And some of us are eating on the go while we're headed off to work, while we're ferrying children to and from activities.

And things that you eat on the go, or things that satisfy your cravings, are rarely healthy foods. Often, they're sugary or salty. In fact, the #1 source of calories in the American diet is desserts, such as cakes, cookies, packaged candies, puddings, or other similar things. Americans consume more calories from sugary drinks than any other kind of beverage. Yikes!

Being brutally honest with yourself about what you're eating will help you make better choices, now and in the future.

Take stock, with a clear eye and total honesty of:

- What and how much you eat and drink
- Your [physical activity](#) level
- Your weight

Those people who are truly successful at [losing weight](#) and keeping it off commit to making lasting changes in their lives. They learn to track their calorie intake —and where it comes from— on a regular basis so that it becomes as natural as anything else practiced over time. You should also commit to tracking your activity level (gym, walking, gardening, etc.) and your [body weight](#) on a regular basis.

OK, so here's how to be honest with yourself and assess what you take in:

- Write down what you eat and drink, and how much. Use the method that suits you best, and that doesn't act as an obstacle to you. Some people use a notepad, some use their smartphone or an app, and yet others use an online tool.
- Start with today. Yes, really. Don't put this off until tomorrow. We know that doesn't work. Write down what you ate and how much. Include what you drank. Factor in sauces, spreads, and sides. Did you sneak a handful of something from a bag in the pantry? Eat the leftovers from your daughter's breakfast. It all counts.
- Next, write down what you did in terms of physical activity. Include how long you spent on each one. You will want to track each activity that you did for 10 minutes or longer. It all adds up. You can use an online tool, you can use a journal, a calendar, or an app on your phone.

- Now, stay in that groove. You have to keep it up. Tracking what you're eating and drinking, and how much —and being really honest with yourself about your physical activity level is a long-term commitment.

Everyone's got obstacles and excuses. Let's head off some of the most common and give you some inspiration to overcome them:

- ***Want to use an online tool or app but don't have internet access every day.*** Use the old-fashioned technique of pen and paper. Then, when you're able to access a computer, you can input the information from several days at one time.

- ***Tracking what I'm eating and drinking takes a lot of time.***

Anything worth doing takes time. You need to pick a method that works for you and make it a habit. It will get easier as you go along. And, if you use an online app or a method like that, you'll be able to develop lists of favorite or regular foods, and you can enter your intake more efficiently this way.

- ***By the time I go to write down my intake, I've forgotten what I ate.*** Uh-uh. For tracking to help you, you have to make it a habit. Figure out a tracking system that can follow you everywhere you go. A small notebook in your purse or pocket will do the trick.
- ***I remember what I ate, but I have no idea how to figure out how much.*** We all fall into this trap. Measure out portions of a few foods you regularly eat to get a good sense of how much a portion is. Measure out one cup of cereal or a half-cup of rice. Then, afterwards you can just eyeball portions.

You should get into the habit of figuring out what a portion is for any food you're eating regularly. Then you'll be able to do this for new foods, too.






3. Know What You Should Eat and Drink

Now that you know what you are actually eating and drinking, it's time to shift to what you **SHOULD** be eating and drinking. There are some [online resources](#) and apps that are excellent tools for doing this. You can use them to help you structure your daily food plans, and to help you choose foods and beverages that give you the nourishment you need while staying within your calorie limits. Then, you'll know you'll be eating and drinking healthily.

You can use these resources to determine how many servings you should have each day from the five food groups (vegetables and legumes/beans; fruit; grains, lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds; dairy products), and also to get information on your total daily calorie limit.

This diet is a way to eat for health and well-being, and that takes practice.

Just like we did above, let's give you some motivation and pointers:

- ***I want to see results now, and I'm not.*** I'm getting frustrated. Remember, you [gained weight](#) slowly. So, it's going to take some time for the weight to come off. You'll be more successful in the end if you lose it gradually. Keep that in mind. And you'll want to remember that you should define success as also developing and sticking to these new healthy habits.
 - ***I'm struggling with willpower.*** Don't change everything all at once. You might try by first decreasing your portion sizes, and then perhaps making different food or meal choices. Also, you can find strength in numbers. Recruit a friend or family member to participate with you, or sign up to an app that will send you text messages to help keep you motivated.
 - ***I'll skip meals—and then I'll lose weight.*** Nope. Skipping meals is not the answer, and it won't help you to be successful over the long-term. Stick to your plan and don't skip meals as a quick fix.
 - ***The healthy food plan meals look huge.*** I'm never going to [lose weight](#) eating all of this. The meals in these food plans are nutritionally dense, healthy choices. They don't contain a lot of saturated fats and added sugars. Fats and added sugars can make up 35% or more of many Americans' diets. If you choose foods without them, you'll be able to eat more, you'll feel fuller—and guess, what? You'll lose weight.
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4. Build An Effective Strategy to Lose Weight

This section echoes the part about being honest with yourself and what you're consuming. When you compare your daily intake to an online checklist, do you see what you could do to improve things? Are you consuming too many sweets? Drinking sugary beverages? Skimping on whole grains or veggies? Maybe you're doing OK at home but when you go out to eat, perhaps you're completely splurging.

Take some time to reflect on how you could be making healthier food choices. Are there time slots, too, where you could squeeze more physical activity into your day?

Now that you've seen how to evaluate your current intake and compare it to what you should be eating, we'll put together a strategy for your [weight loss](#).

Making real, permanent changes to your [diet and lifestyle](#) —and committing to them— will help you manage your weight. Here, in summary, is the way to do it:

- Calculate —and— eat the right calories for you
- Shrink portion sizes
- Cut down on empty calories
- Focus on the right foods
- Make smart choices when dining out
- Make healthy meals at home
- Pump up your physical activity
- Cut down on screen time
- Develop healthy meal plans

You'll find a chapter covering each of these topics to guide you through on how to make lasting changes in your life.





5. Calculate —and— Eat The Right Calories For You

You have your own individual calorie needs. Figuring out what your daily intake should be, and how to stay within it, is the secret to maintaining a [healthy weight](#).

Every day, you take in energy in the form of calories. You also burn energy through basic bodily functions and physical activity.

When you balance the energy you consume and the energy you expend, you maintain a steady weight. When you consume fewer calories than you expend, you lose weight. When you eat more calories than you burn, you gain weight. Most people eat more than they burn, and that's why so many people [struggle with their weight](#).

So, you need to find the right amount of calories for your personal needs. There are many online resources and apps where you can enter your age, sex, height, weight, and amount of daily physical activity, and you will be provided with the right daily calorie amount for you.

Now that you've got a recommended total daily calorie intake. You should keep it in mind as your guide, and as you select your foods and drinks throughout the day. You're going to have to make choices: you can't consume all your calories in one sitting. If you have a recommended daily intake of 1,800 and you eat a huge stack of pancakes and syrup coming in at 1,200 at breakfast, you have only 600 calories remaining to divide over lunch, snacks, dinner, and any beverages.

You can make choices all day long, and you can also make choices day-to-day. Sometimes you might have that big breakfast—and a smaller lunch and dinner.

You can read food labels to compare snack, meal, or beverage options; choosing ones that help you remain within your daily guidelines.

You also need to get used to checking nutrition facts labels on foods in order to make smart choices quickly and easily. You can compare similar foods this way, weighing how large portion sizes are and how many calories are in each serving. It's always a good idea to choose the option with fewer calories (and larger serving size, if possible —that way you can eat more and still take in fewer calories overall!). Be sure to be honest with yourself: if you eat more than a serving, track the real calories you've consumed. We all like to grab just one more handful.

You can also see calorie information on menus when you're eating out — often restaurants print this to help you make good choices.

Need some more help figuring out the calories in food? You can use an online food tracker as a quick reference.

You'll get better at tracking calories so that it becomes more natural for you. Keep your chin up, and keep these tips in mind:

- ***How can I stay within my daily limit?*** Use a checklist to determine how much you should be eating from each of the five food groups. Then, be honest and do it.
- ***I don't have time to do this.*** Yes, you do. You've committed to [losing weight](#) and making healthier choices. While you don't have to track every single calorie, you do need to have a good sense of your intake and your calorie expenditure. It's up to you to find ways to be successful.
- ***Even a small number of calories makes a difference.*** Staying within your limit is important. Regular snacking and sneaking in a few calories, even 50-100, can make a difference over time.



The measure of success is how you're doing over time. If you're losing weight, then you're doing it right. You're taking in fewer calories than you're burning.



6. Shrink Portion Sizes

We all have a tendency to overeat. Eating is pleasurable, and food tastes good. And sometimes when we're eating while watching TV or reading or working, or when we're with friends, we eat a little mindlessly, too. That's when you can get into trouble and consume too many calories.

The other factor that's at play here is that portion and plate sizes have increased over time. With a bigger plate, you might put more food on it. And, with larger food items, you might be consuming your entire recommended amount for the whole day in one sitting.

If you're able to shrink portion sizes, so that you're eating smaller amounts of the same food, you'll lose weight over time. An app or online checklist can help you manage your intake by recommending the amount of food you should consume from each of the five food groups.

Keep an eye on what you're supposed to be eating. If you're supposed to have five servings of grains per day, and you have 2 pieces of toast, you have to count both those pieces of toast.

In addition to being honest about servings, you should also get used to measuring out the portion sizes so you can be able to eyeball what a portion or serving truly is. You can do this using your dishes and glasses at home. Measure a cup of milk or juice into a glass you regularly use. Pour one cup of cereal into a bowl. See what this looks like so you can do it without a measuring cup.

You should also serve yourself smaller portions of food. Give yourself a conservatively sized portion of food on your plate, and eat only that. Eat slowly and mindfully, pause between bites, sip water. Wait a moment before helping yourself to more. Eat only when you're still hungry.

You should learn to pay attention to your hunger. Eat until the point where you feel satisfied. It takes practice to get there, but you'll develop it. If you're satisfied, and there is still food on your plate, it's ok not to eat it. Save it for later.

You could also try using a smaller plate. Rather than a large dinner plate, could you use a salad plate? The same amount of food looks larger on a smaller plate, and you can trick your eyes and mind.

Be mindful also when you eat out. Restaurant portions can be huge. Could you share with someone else at the table? Save some and take it home? We'll cover more on this later.

Everyone has a point in the day when they hit a weak spot. What's yours? If you tend to overeat or to feel tempted, try to become aware of it. Could you take a walk, instead? Call a friend? Or, if you really need to eat something, try to swap something healthy (an apple for chips, frozen yogurt with fruit for ice cream). You'll respect yourself more in the morning!

Let's cover some common pitfalls with some sage advice:

- ***I don't have time to measure everything.*** It takes just a few minutes to develop a keen eye for portion sizes. Do it once and you'll have the ability to do it without the measuring tools.

- ***I'm confused: should I eat more of some things, less of others?***
A good rule of thumb is to think really carefully about portion sizes for the foods that are highest in calories: pizza, fries, creamy pasta dishes, cheese, and more. If you're eating foods like vegetables and fruits, you can eat more. They don't have nearly as many calories.

- ***I like to splurge on a big treat every once in a while.*** Most of the time, you should try to eat smaller portions. You can't cheat on a daily basis and expect to see progress. But, we're human! Having a treat every once in a while is allowed. Just make sure you've made some healthy choices elsewhere in that day, or the day before or after, so that overall you're on the right track.

- ***My mother used to yell at me to clean my plate! I can't help it now.*** OK, this one belongs to yesteryear. Wipe it clean from your mind. You are done eating when you've eaten enough, not when your plate is clean. You can always save food as leftovers for another meal.





7. Cut Down on Empty Calories

You'll make great progress on your [healthy diet and weight loss](#) goals by cutting out empty calories. What are empty calories? They're calories that come from fats, added sugars, or both. You'll find them in foods and beverages that include calories but don't have a lot of nutrients. Examples include desserts, sugary drinks, candies, chips, and other salty, high-fat snacks. In short, they're junk food.


Other foods and beverages may be nourishing but also contain empty calories. You might like whole-milk yogurt or cheese, but there could be a lot of additional fat calories in these choices. Instead, you might choose a low-fat yogurt. You still get the same amount to eat, but the calories you're consuming are lower overall.

Empty calories are a no-go whether you're overweight, [underweight](#), or at a healthy weight. No more than 15% of most diets should come from fats and added sugars. Many of us eat many more empty calories, perhaps up to 35% of all calories. That's because Americans eat a lot of packaged/processed foods, sugary beverages, and other junk.

To cut back on empty calories, you can use these three strategies:

- Eat foods or choose drinks with little or no added sugars or fats. The easiest way to do this is to drink water. Think of it this way: a can of soda has the equivalent of 10 packets of sugar in it. Ick. Drink water.
- Consume foods and drinks that contain added sugars and fats less often than you currently do. Swap out dessert for fruit, or make dessert something you have only twice a week instead of every day.
- When you do eat foods high in added sugars and fats, eat smaller amounts. Instead of an ice cream sundae, choose a kiddie scoop if you have gone to an ice cream parlor. Have one cookie instead of two.

Other issues to consider may include:

- ***How can I know by reading a food label if the food contains empty calories?*** Choose foods with little to no saturated fats and with no trans fats. You can also check the ingredients list. A red flag is "sugar" or sugars listed as one of the first ingredients.
 - ***I'm confused. Should I focus on total calories? Or just empty calories?*** Staying within your limit is important. But you also want to make sure you're eating healthy, nutritious food.
 - ***Sometimes, I can't help my cravings. I have to have something I want.*** Could you get your sweet tooth fix another way —frozen grapes? A yogurt popsicle? Maybe you can start to steer your palate in another direction, with time.
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8. Focus on the Right Foods

Wouldn't you love to eat healthy—and feel good? A healthier plate can help you feel great. Foods such as veggies, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean proteins (chicken, fish, pork, and similar foods) are nutrient-dense foods without being calorie-dense foods.

When you make food choices each day for meals and snacks, you should stick to your checklist plan you've set for yourself. The majority of the foods and drinks you consume should be distributed among the five food groups. You should eat a variety of foods from these food groups and make smart, conscious, healthy choices to fuel your energy, take care of your body, and move towards a healthier weight. Remember the section above, about smaller portions and choosing foods that were lower overall in calories? Making careful, smart choices, such as swapping out whole milk for skim milk or full-fat cheese for lower-fat cheese can really count. You should make a habit out of reading and comparing labels when looking at meats, cheeses, and packaged foods. Choose those with lower fat content and less added sugar.

You should also make smart choices about foods that have already been prepared or that you will order or be served —can you order fruit for dessert instead of ice cream? What about baked chicken instead of fried?

You should also strive to eat a balanced diet in terms of the kinds of calories you consume. Calories come from carbohydrates (grains), proteins (meats, beans and nuts), and fats (found in many sources, but often in dairy, meats, and oils). You should select a diet that is balanced among these nutrients, with carbohydrates and then proteins providing the majority of your calories, and fats consumed in moderation. Your diet plan should include foods from each of the five groups, and this will help you make sure you're eating a well-balanced diet containing your nutrition needs.

Here are some specific strategies to help you make smart choices all day long:

- ***Eat breakfast to fuel you all day long.*** You might be tempted to skip breakfast —but that strategy usually tanks. Breakfast-skippers usually tack the calories on somewhere else.
- ***Don't tempt yourself —think ahead, think smart.*** Make sure you have healthy snacks on hand at home, and with you when you're out and about. Crackers and low-fat cheese, apple slices and nuts, raisins and carrot sticks all make good choices.
- ***Prepare meals that include veggies, fruits, grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean proteins.*** Online resources and apps can provide you with good advice and with sample meal plans to guide your consumption.
- ***Swap out high-calorie foods for low-calorie foods.*** A really easy way to do this, by sight, is to think that half of your plate, at any meal, should be fruits or veggies. Try making a big salad with some of your favorite veggies and a low-fat dressing, or simple oil and vinegar.

Some additional tips and inspiration for you:

- ***Find fruits and veggies you really like.*** Not everyone likes everything. Don't force yourself to eat something you don't like. If you're not a salad or raw veggie fan, try the same veggies in a stir-fry or soup. Sometimes, you might not like a veggie raw, but you'll like it cooked.
- ***I am not a milk person.*** Milk isn't the only way to get calcium, protein, and other essential nutrients. You might choose dairy servings such as low-fat yogurt or cheese; cottage cheese; kefir; or you might try smoothies, tofu, or puddings.
- ***I want to make sure I'm making foods my family will eat —otherwise we're all going to be frustrated.*** Ah, the dinner scramble. Hungry kids, hungry spouse. You have to be patient, and you have to be in this effort as a team. Be the change you want to see: be enthusiastic about your food choices, involve your family in meal planning, and if you've got something leftover, save it or freeze it for another meal.
- ***I'm worried about spending a lot on produce such as fruits and veggies.*** Whatever your grocery budget, you can afford fruits and vegetables. You might stretch your budget by choosing those that are in season, or you can choose canned fruit (in 100% juice) and canned vegetables with "no salt added." You can also get frozen fruit and veggies. Be sure to watch for sales and bring coupons to the store to help you save some cash.



A decorative border of pink peonies and cherry blossoms with green leaves frames the top and bottom of the page.

9. Make Smart Choices When Dining Out

Eating out is often a great treat: you don't have to cook the meal, and you don't have to clean up. Maybe you're meeting friends, celebrating a special occasion, or just grabbing something on the go when you don't have the time to make a meal at home.

But, eating out can also be a diet sabotage. How often are you eating out? Daily? Weekly? The more often you eat out, the more likely you are to be struggling with your weight. You need to get in the habit of making smarter choices when you're out.

Just as you've done in getting a handle on what you're eating and drinking at home, you should practice the same strategy when eating out:

- Be conscious of what you are eating and drinking
- Be conscious of how much you are eating and drinking
- Be conscious of how your meal is prepared

Restaurants often have calorie counts available, either on the menu or on a website. Or, you can ask a server. Compare food and beverage choices, and consider how they fit within your meal plan and recommended daily calorie intake. And you absolutely must include the calories from the appetizers, bread basket snacks, drinks, dressings, sides, and other items.

When considering your options, look for dishes that seem lighter or are perhaps marked "light" or "healthy" on the menu —dishes that are vegetable-based, have whole grains, or are built around lean proteins. These will help you make good dining choices.

You also need to be careful about what you're drinking. Ask for water. Order unsweetened tea. Skip the soda, the milkshake, and other high-calorie choices. If you're drinking an alcoholic beverage, you can be wise about the choice too. Frozen drinks (margaritas, for instance) contain more calories than a simple glass of wine or a beer.

Even if you've done well during your meal, you might blow it at dessert. Some restaurants are now in the practice of serving mini-portion, which is a smart and healthy way to still have a small reward. Or, maybe you can order fruit.

You also want to be really careful about portion sizes. Restaurant portions tend to be huge. And once you've got a huge, steaming plate of delicious food in front of you, you're going to need a lot of willpower to stop eating. So, choose a smaller sized meal, share it, or have the waiter put half in a take-home box and only serve you half hot. Or, ask for a take-home box and put half your meal into it before you start eating.

Also, be smart about buffets and salad bars. You'll be tempted to load up and then go back multiple times. Order an entrée that is brought to you.

Be careful about choosing meals that are high-fat, high-calorie items. Don't go for fried or sautéed choices. Look out for these red flags: creamy, breaded, battered, buttered, or fried. When ordering salads and other things with sauces or dressings, ask for them on the side so you can control how much is put on the food.

Speaking of salads: these can be high-calorie items. Be wary of salads that contain fried chicken, lots of cheese, lots of salami or other cold cuts, and other things like this. Choose salads that are mostly vegetables, and again—ask for the dressing on the side.

Don't feel you have to be part of the "clean plate club." You can always take leftovers home.





10. Make Healthy Meals at Home

Let's face it: it's often far, far easier to eat out or pick something up on the way home. And, restaurant meals and fast food taste absolutely delicious. But, as we've mentioned above, these food choices can completely sabotage your efforts to get to and maintain a [healthy weight](#). A great strategy for getting to (and staying at) that healthy weight is to make more food at home. You'll also eat healthier, and you'll save money along the way.

The same rules that apply to cooking at home, apply to making food choices and to eating out or picking up takeout. You have to eat the right foods, cut down or eliminate empty calories, and really be mindful of portion sizes.

You can find many recipes that are based on healthy, whole, fresh ingredients, that are simple to prepare, and that include a calorie content per serving, so you can make sure you stay within your recommended guidelines. Having an idea of the calorie content per serving is important, especially if you're cooking for a family where different members have different daily caloric needs .

If you don't already cook much, you will need to work towards making this a [healthy habit](#) as well. Perhaps a good goal would be to cook 1-2 times per week.

Start planning and cooking meals with the same approach that you had to building a healthy meal plan or eating out. Start with thinking about the fact that the majority of the meal should be fresh fruits and veggies. Add whole grains and low-fat dairy.

Most people who are successful at cooking at home plan ahead to do so. And, they might plan a whole week's worth of meals at a time. This is something you can work up to.

You can also make sure your kitchen and fridge are filled with healthy, tasty ingredients so that nourishing meals that fit within your food plan can come together quickly. Stock the pantry, fridge, and freezer with whole-grain pasta, lean proteins, canned and frozen low- or no-salt-added vegetables, fresh fruit and vegetables, and low-fat dairy products.

You can make some of your old favorite recipes, but seek out ways to make them healthier. Use low-fat or reduced-fat cheese in your favorite lasagna recipe, and swap ground chuck for ground sirloin in burgers and chili. Use Greek yogurt instead of sour cream. You can also punch up the flavor in foods with spices and herbs.

Here are other ways to make sure you stay inspired to cook at home:

- ***I really resent being the only one who cooks.*** Include your family. Can you involve your kids in cooking or prepping? Can you ask them to suggest a healthy meal once a week? What a great way to inspire them to [eat healthy](#).
- ***I just don't have the time to cook.*** Yes, cooking takes time, and cleaning up the kitchen does, too. But there are ways you can make this easier. Make recipes that can stretch for more than a night. Choose ingredients you can prep once, but cook twice —chicken, perhaps, that's served broiled one night and in soup the next. Or, dedicate one weekend afternoon to prepping ingredients or meals for several days.
- ***My family whines about meals at home.*** It's hard to compromise as a family. Start gradually, involve everyone, and make this a group activity.





11. Pump Up Your Physical Activity

Sorry, there aren't any shortcuts here. Physically active people are healthier people. You don't need to commit to be a marathon runner, but you do need to work physical activity into your [healthy life](#).

You'll sleep better, feel better, lift your spirits, and even look better. You'll also help prevent diseases such as heart disease, Type II diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Everyone needs a different amount of [physical activity](#) for health. As a beginning goal, you should work towards the equivalent of 150 minutes per week. Some people trying to lose weight will need to do 300 minutes of physical activity per week to see results.

This number can seem discouraging, yes. But remember, your weight is a result of the number of calories in, calories out, day after day. You have the greatest chance at seeing lasting results long-term if you expend more calories than you burn over time. So, how do you make physical activity a part of your daily life?

First, choose things that you like to do. Make sure you create a routine that fits into your life. If you can exercise with friends or family, you'll have a built-in support system.

Keep a log of your exercise and gradually increase your activity.

Common objections include:

-I hate exercising and sweating. That's why it's important to pick things you like. Aim, at first, for just 10 minutes per day. If you cannot stand the idea of running on a treadmill, choose something else. Ride your bike, try swimming, walking —anything is better than sitting on the couch.

-I'm exhausted just thinking about exercising. It seems counterintuitive, but exercising actually helps contribute to your energy level. You'll feel better the more you do it.

-When am I done? You should aim for at least 10 minutes of exercise at any one time. You can combine several 10-minute sessions over the course of a day to get to your total.



12. Cut Down on Screen Time

Screen time —time spent in front of a computer or the TV— can completely sabotage your best efforts towards getting more physical activity. The more time you spend in front of a screen, the less energy you're expending overall.

Many people spend a lot of time in front of the computer for work. You won't be able to change this fact, most likely, but you can take steps to make sure you're active at other times of your day.


There are proactive ways to make sure you're maximizing your opportunity for physical activity:

- Track the time you're in front of a screen, just as you're monitoring the time you're [exercising](#) and watching out for the foods and beverages you're drinking. Honesty is the best place to start. You should write down all the time you spend in front of a screen outside of work time.
- Give yourself limits on screen time. Prioritize the shows you'd like to see and the tasks you need to get done via the computer. Brainstorm a list of other things you could be doing other than watching TV or playing video games or checking Facebook. You could take a nature walk, play hide-and-seek with your kids or take them to the park, or weed your garden.
- When you are watching TV, make it an active time. If you're watching TV, you could also be exercising! Many people watch their favorite shows while riding a stationary exercise bike or walking or jogging on a treadmill. Or, use commercial breaks to jump rope, do crunches or pushups, or other exercises.
- Don't fall into the trap of snacking while watching TV —or eating your meals in front of the TV, either. When you do this, you're not focusing on what you're eating, and you're not able to concentrate well on your food. You're much more likely to overeat.

Many of us are reluctant to give up screen time, watching TV or being on the computer because it is something safe, easy, and familiar. Here's some inspiration to get you over the common humps:

-TV is my way of relaxing after a long day. Just as with family dinners and cooking, it can take time to shift into new routines. Could you cut down on TV 1-2 nights a week? Could you prioritize which shows really matter, and go for a walk during one of them you're not crazy about?

-Give it to me straight: how much TV time should I limit myself to, honestly? As a general guideline, capping your screen time to 2 hours, total, outside of work or other obligations, means you'll have more time to be active.



13. Create Healthy Meals on Every Plate

As you get more comfortable making healthy choices throughout the day, you'll get more practice in creating healthy meals on every plate —breakfast, lunch, and dinner, whether you're eating at home or eating out.

As discussed in the sections about portion sizes and cooking at home, start with a commitment to make half of your plate vegetables and fresh fruits. You can make big salads, steamed vegetables, or you can use frozen vegetables, too. You'll experiment with the vegetables you most like so that you're really motivated to eat healthy—and to enjoy it, too.

Consume Lean Protein

Lean protein fills you up, gives you great nutrients, and contributes to a healthy plate. These proteins include the leanest version of pork, ground beef or other beef, turkey, chicken, beans, or tofu. Seafood is an excellent choice of lean protein, too.

Choose Whole Grains

Choose carbohydrates labeled "100% whole grain." These foods will fill you up, provide fiber and nutrients, and be less dense in calories than their counterparts made from refined flours. Examples of whole grain foods include whole wheat pasta, brown or wild rice, quinoa, bulgur wheat, couscous, and wheat or multigrain breads.

Milk and Dairy Do a Body Good

Low-fat yogurt, cheese, or milk round out a healthy plate.

Don't Add Fat or Sugar

Sauces, butter, dressings, and other toppings can add fat, calories, and sugar quickly —undermining your efforts to eat more healthily. Oil and vinegar (in moderation) on a salad provide flavor with minimal calories. Spread butter thinly on toast or vegetables. Portion out sauces or dressings and use as little as you can over the course of a meal.



Savor the Flavor

Don't be in a rush to stuff your face. Eat slowly, pause between portions to make sure you're full. Don't continue eating because you feel you need to clean your plate.

As noted before, use a smaller plate. Serve yourself smaller portions and see if you're full before going for more. Pack lunches for work or school, so that you're not eating out as much.

Most of us have a bit of a sweet tooth. You can indulge, but do it with smart choices. Fresh peaches on low-fat yogurt taste great.

Variety is the Spice of Life

You might also try some new foods. Who knows? Maybe you'll find a new favorite. Spend some time in the produce section of the grocery store to find choices that keep you excited about your healthful eating. You can also keep things interesting by working new recipes into your routine. You can find many blogs online with great choices, or you can ask friends and family for suggestions.





14. Guide to Budget-Friendly Healthy Eating

You might be thinking by this point: this all sounds great, but I am not sure I can stretch my grocery budget so far with so many fresh foods.

Yes, you can. It's possible. You have to be disciplined and plan ahead, but you should do it for yourself—and for your family. Here are some secrets for eating healthy on a budget:

- **Plan ahead.** You should plan meals for the entire week. Look for meals that make a lot of food, but don't have meat as a huge portion of the ingredients. Stews and soups are good examples of this. You can eat meat, but the food will be stretched with potatoes and other veggies. Before you go to the store, take inventory of what's in your pantry, and don't buy something you already have at home.
- **Use coupons and stock up during sales.** Many stores have sales on some of your most expensive items, such as meat or produce. You can also take advantage of "buy one get one free" sales to stock up.
- **Look for the best price.** Sometimes, similar items aren't similar in price. Stores often display a "unit price" below the item, so you can easily evaluate similar choices.
- **Buy in bulk.** Whenever you can afford just a bit extra, buy the larger box or bag of the item. You're getting a better deal.
- **Opt for foods that are in season.** Foods that aren't in season are more expensive because they aren't as plentiful and they often have to be shipped from far away.
- **Buy basics.** Pre-packaged, processed foods are more costly. Even if it costs you a bit in time to cut vegetables or cook rice from scratch (instead of "minute rice"), you'll save money.
- **Some foods are always a deal.** Apples, bananas, canned beans, and whole-grain pasta are always a good price.
- **Cook ahead.** Be a "weekend warrior" and make foods ahead of time on the weekend. Perhaps you can even pack a few days' worth of lunches.
- **Can you cook once, eat twice?** Perhaps you roast a chicken one night, eat it in sandwiches the next day, and on the third day, eat some on a salad.
- **Going out? Be smart.** Order water. Go out for lunch instead of dinner —this can save a great deal. Or, choose only an entrée and skip the appetizer or dessert.

It can be hard to make lasting, [healthy changes](#) in your life. You're doing the right thing by starting here with good information and clear, action plans. Whatever your weight goal, you're going to make a lasting difference for your health by following this advice: by understanding your intake, making smarter choices, eating at home more often, getting more exercise, and learning how to buy healthy foods even on a budget.