



AMA Healthier Life Steps™

A physician-patient alliance for a longer, healthier life

Action plan for healthy eating

The goal

Every healthy adult, every day, should:

- Eat 1 ½ to 2 ½ cup-size servings of fruit.
- Eat 2 to 4 cup-size servings of vegetables.
- Eat mostly whole grains.
- Avoid unhealthy trans fats and saturated fats.
- Limit salty and sugary foods.
- Keep total calories to an amount that is right for his/her height and weight.

Getting ready

Many people think eating healthy means going on a diet. You can, however, eat healthier by making small changes over time. Eating healthy benefits everyone, not just those trying to lose weight.

Eating healthier can help you:

- Prevent and control chronic diseases, such as
 - High blood pressure
 - Heart disease
 - Stroke
 - Diabetes
 - Cancer
 - Osteoporosis (bone thinning)
- Feel less tired and have more energy
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Lose weight



Think about what might hold you back from eating healthier. Plan ways to get around these barriers.

Possible barrier	Tips to get around the barrier
Fears that healthy food will not taste good.	Try different fruits and vegetables to find those you like.
Not enough time or money to make or buy healthy foods.	Plan ahead. On the weekends, fix food for the upcoming week. Look for sales in supermarkets.
“All-or-none” thinking: Some people feel that if they cannot make the big change, they can’t make any change at all.	If you cannot give up an unhealthy food item, then limit how much and how often you eat it.

Taking action

Think about the typical breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks that you ate over the past two weeks. Where do you feel you have the greatest chance of taking steps to eat healthier?

To begin your plan to make eating changes, choose one or two of the action items listed below. Or write in your own eating changes in the space provided.

- Snack on fruit instead of candy bars or cookies.
- Have at least one cup of vegetables (cooked or raw) at dinner.
- Use whole wheat bread on sandwiches instead of white bread.
- Drink water or unsweetened iced tea instead of soda.
- Eat only half of the food on your plate at restaurants.
- Pack your lunch one day a week instead of eating out at a restaurant.
- Don’t add salt to any food.
- Eat no more than one small sugary snack or dessert a day.

My first healthy eating goal:

My start date:

Track the food you eat on your Progress Tracking Calendar.



Keep going

1. Make one new addition to your plan weekly or monthly, such as:
 - This week/month I will eat two more servings of fruit each day.
 - Next week/month I will eat whole wheat bread instead of white.
 - The following week/month I will not add salt to any of my food.
2. Gradually eat healthier foods more often and eat less healthy foods less often.

What to enjoy more	What to limit
Fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried)	High calorie snacks and fried foods
Vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried)	Red meat and processed meat
Whole grains	Salt (sodium) and salty foods
Water or low-calorie beverages	Sugary snacks and drinks

3. Look for new foods and recipes that will help you eat healthier.
4. Nutrition facts labels on food products list how many calories, and how much unhealthy saturated fat, trans fat and salt (sodium) are in the food you eat. Remember to read the “servings per container” number on the label to see how it matches what you would normally eat or drink. *(See example on page 4)*
5. Write these planned changes on your Progress Tracking Calendar.
6. Refer to the useful resources listed below for tips that may help you make and follow your plan.

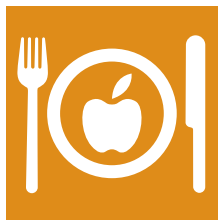


<p>Start here</p> <p>Check calories</p> <p>Limit these nutrients</p> <p>Get enough of these nutrients</p> <p>Footnote</p>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Nutrition Facts</h3> <p>Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container 2</p> <hr/> <p>Amount Per Serving</p> <p>Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: right;">% Daily Value*</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Total Fat 12g</td> <td style="text-align: right;">18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Saturated Fat 3g</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Trans Fat 3g</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cholesterol 30mg</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sodium 460mg</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Potassium 700mg</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Carbohydrate 31g</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Dietary Fiber 0g</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Sugars 5g</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Protein 5g</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vitamin A</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vitamin C</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Calcium</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Iron</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4%</td> </tr> </table> <p><small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; font-size: small;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Calories:</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2,000</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Fat</td> <td>Less than</td> <td>65g</td> <td>80g</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sat Fat</td> <td>Less than</td> <td>20g</td> <td>25g</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cholesterol</td> <td>Less than</td> <td>300mg</td> <td>300mg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sodium</td> <td>Less than</td> <td>2,400mg</td> <td>2,400mg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Carbohydrate</td> <td></td> <td>300g</td> <td>375g</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dietary Fiber</td> <td></td> <td>25g</td> <td>30g</td> </tr> </table>	Total Fat 12g	18%	Saturated Fat 3g	15%	Trans Fat 3g		Cholesterol 30mg	10%	Sodium 460mg	20%	Potassium 700mg	20%	Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%	Dietary Fiber 0g	0%	Sugars 5g		Protein 5g		Vitamin A	4%	Vitamin C	2%	Calcium	20%	Iron	4%		Calories:	2,000	2,500	Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g	Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g	Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg	Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg	Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g	Dietary Fiber		25g	30g	<p>Quick guide to % daily value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5% or less is low ■ 20% or more is high
Total Fat 12g	18%																																																									
Saturated Fat 3g	15%																																																									
Trans Fat 3g																																																										
Cholesterol 30mg	10%																																																									
Sodium 460mg	20%																																																									
Potassium 700mg	20%																																																									
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%																																																									
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%																																																									
Sugars 5g																																																										
Protein 5g																																																										
Vitamin A	4%																																																									
Vitamin C	2%																																																									
Calcium	20%																																																									
Iron	4%																																																									
	Calories:	2,000	2,500																																																							
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g																																																							
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g																																																							
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg																																																							
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg																																																							
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g																																																							
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g																																																							

Source: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/learn-it/label.htm>

Factors for success

- Prepare for breaks in your plan (illness, busy at work, travel, vacations, etc.).
- Look for other healthy eating options and choose something healthy rather than nothing.
- Be realistic! Often we have high expectations, and when we have difficulty or feel we failed to meet our goals, we give up.
- Stick with it. If what you're doing isn't working, try something else. Keep moving toward your goal of healthier eating.
- Take time to enjoy your food. Eating slowly gives your body time to recognize your stomach is full.



- If you need to make a big change in what you eat because of a health problem, or if you need to lose a lot of weight, ask your doctor to refer you to other professionals for extra help. The resources listed below can also be helpful.
- Remember, you're not going on a diet. You're building healthier habits for a lifetime.

Useful resources

- **US Department of Agriculture and National Agricultural Library, Food and Nutrition Information Center**
 - http://riley.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=4&tax_subject=358
 - <http://www.nutrition.gov/>
- **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Produce for Better Health Foundation**
 - <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>
 - <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>
- **National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health**
 - http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/food/guideeat/Actiongd.html
- **American Dietetic Association**
 - <http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/nutrition.html>
- **American Heart Association**
 - <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200010>
- **American Cancer Society**
 - http://www.cancer.org/docroot/subsite/greatamericans/Eat_Right.asp

Portion-size information

- **University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the US Department of Agriculture**
 - <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/PortnDis.pdf>
- **National Heart Lung and Blood Institute**
 - <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/servingcard7.pdf>
 - <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/>