



AMA Healthier Life Steps™

A physician-patient alliance for a longer, healthier life

Action plan for healthy eating

The goal

Every day:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Slow down and enjoy your food. Pay attention to when you feel hungry or full.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Eat mostly whole grains.
- Avoid large portions.
- Compare sodium in foods and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

Getting ready

Many people think eating healthy means going on a “diet.” However, healthy eating is really a life-long practice. It is not always easy, so make small changes over time. Eating healthy is good for 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
The belief 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 next week. Look for healthy foods that are on sale.
Fear of making big changes.	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 meals 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, choose one or two of the action items listed below or write in your own eating changes in the blank spaces.

- Snack on fruit instead of candy bars or cookies.
- Have at least one cup of vegetables (cooked or raw) at dinner.
- Choose whole-wheat bread on a sandwich instead of white bread.
- Instead of soda, drink water or tea without sugar.
- When eating out, eat only half of the food on your plate. Bring the rest home for another meal.
- Pack your lunch one day a week instead of eating out.
- Take at least 20 minutes to eat at every meal.
- Enjoy only one small sugary snack or dessert per 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 each week or month, 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 my food.
2. Gradually eat healthy foods more often and eat less healthy foods less often.

What to enjoy more often	What to eat less often
Fruits (fresh, frozen, canned or dried)	High calorie snacks and fried foods
Vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned or dried)	Fatty 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 better.
4. “Nutrition Facts” labels list how many calories, and how much unhealthy saturated fat, trans fat and salt (sodium) are in food products. Read the “servings per container” number on the label to see how it compares to how much you eat or drink.
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.



Start here —

Check calories —

Limit these nutrients —

Get enough of these nutrients —

Footnote —

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value*

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%**

Quick guide to % daily value

- 5% or less is low
- 20% or more is high

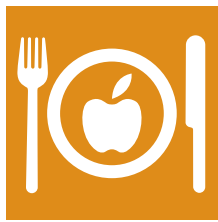
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	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: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/eat-right/nutrition-facts.htm
Accessed: November 29, 2011.

Factors for success

- Think ahead and prepare for breaks in your plan (illness, busy at work, travel, vacations, etc.).
- Seek out the healthiest food and drink options.
- Be realistic! Set small goals.
- Stick with it. If what you are doing is not 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 know when your stomach is full.
- Ask your doctor to refer you to other professionals for extra help. The resources listed below can also be helpful.
- Remember, you are not going on a diet. You are building healthier habits for a lifetime.



Useful resources

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
 - choosemyplate.gov
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Produce for Better Health Foundation**
 - fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov
 - fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
- **American Dietetic Association**
 - eatright.org
- **American Heart Association**
 - americanheart.org
- **American Cancer Society**
 - cancer.org