

## Tips to Eliminate Junk Food in your Diet

There is an increasing concern these days about junk food. Too much can take away your natural hunger for healthier choices and make you want more foods and beverages that are high in fat, salt and/or sugar.

High calorie snacks are often inexpensive and can easily found. However, they often replace our need for fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy.

Often our minds and bodies are overwhelmed with foods that have little nutritional value but are good tasting with a great smell, texture and color that are attractive to our eyes and taste-buds.

Here are some tips that can help you stay away from junk food and help you to make better food choices

- **Eat regular meals so you do not get too hungry.** If you are too hungry, your stomach sends signals to the reward system in your brain that you need to respond to any food cues you see. Try to keep a regular meal schedule, skip fad diets and include healthy foods and lots of fruits and vegetables in your diet.
- **Drink water first and eliminate sugar sweetened beverages.** Sugary drinks such as sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks or sweetened teas may lead to weight gain. One reason this may happen is that liquid calories may not be interpreted by the brain as people eat only slightly less food when they drink a glass of regular soda rather than when they drink a zero-calorie glass of water or diet soda.
- **Eat snacks that are nutritious and low in calories.** Do you get hungry between meals? Try snacking on a piece of fruit or vegetable sticks with hummus. Identify foods that you enjoy that are low in calories and also low in fat, salt and sugar. Pick foods you enjoy eating so you don't end up craving junk food. Our stomach and brain needs to be satisfied with consumed at meals and in-between.
- **Understand your stressors.** Take time to notice emotional triggers that can set you up to crave tasty junk foods. Go for a walk, call a friend, try some meditation, or distract yourself. Stressful settings will cause you to have food cravings that will cause your blood sugar to rise and fall quickly which will affect your energy level and cardiovascular health. Planning ahead on how you handle these triggers will help you to choose healthier food options that are not as high in calories.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** People who don't get much sleep tend to eat more and gain weight. They also tend to eat more high carbohydrate and fat foods. Try to get 7 to 8 hours a sleep each night. Less than 3 to 4 hours makes adults more prone to weight gain and poor eating habits.
- **Keep a smile on your face and realize there is a downside to food and beverage advertising.** There are lots of marketing on television, internet and social media that makes junk food temptation. Sometimes it is difficult to pass up these temptations. Try taking small steps to make changes to stay away from junk food and make healthier food choices.

