

Health Fact Sheet

10 Ways to Eat Less



Experts agree that a balance of energy intake and physical activity is an important factor in maintaining a healthy weight. For overweight individuals who are trying to reach a healthy weight, eating less can be a challenge because of the belief that one has to either starve oneself or give up his/her favorite foods. Fortunately this is not the case. Below are some simple tips to help you eat less without cutting out your favorite foods. Give them a try – what do you have to lose?

- 1. Plan your meals and snacks.** A hard day's work combined with no dinner plans makes eating out look pretty good. People who eat out often consume more calories and fat than those who prepare their meals at home. Each week, make time to plan your meals and snacks. Be sure to include plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- 2. Eat from a plate, not a bag or a box.** When you put food on a plate you can see how much you are eating. It's hard to judge how much you are eating when you grab a "handful" of chips from the bag or "just a few" cookies from the box.
- 3. If you eat out, just say "NO" to super-sized portions.** You may get a larger bag of fries for a few cents more, but you also get more fat and calories than you probably need. Is that **really** a value?
- 4. Think twice before you reach for that second helping.** Did you know that it takes the brain about 20 minutes to realize the stomach is full? Take a rest between servings – you may realize you don't need them.

5. Use a smaller size plate. Some people like seeing plates piled high with food. A smaller size plate fills up faster but still looks like there is a large amount of food. If you think you are getting a large amount of food, you won't feel cheated.

6. Switch from full-calorie sodas to diet or water. Between regular sodas, diet sodas and water, water is the best choice. However, if you are going to drink colas on a daily basis, changing to diet sodas can save you some serious calories. A regular cola has about 150 calories; a diet cola has about four. Water has zero calories.

7. Portion your meals at the stove, not at the kitchen table. Keeping large bowls of food on the table can tempt a person into eating more – especially when the stomach hasn't had those 20 minutes to tell the brain that it is full.

8. Switch to lower-fat dairy products. Dairy products are a great source of calcium – a mineral that is lacking in the diets of many Americans. When people try to lose weight, they often cut dairy products out of their diets. Is weight loss at the expense of healthy bones a wise trade off? Use skim or 1% milk instead of whole milk and you can save as much as 60 calories per one-cup serving. Other good choices are low-fat cheese and yogurt.

9. Remember that fat-free is not calorie free. If you don't believe it, read the Nutrition Facts panel on food labels. The Nutrition Facts panel is a great source of information for consumers who want to know the amounts of calories, fat, and nutrients they are getting from their food. Use the Nutrition Facts panel to find lower fat and lower calorie versions of your favorite foods.

10. Sit down and enjoy your meals. Too often we eat in the car, while watching television, or while doing other activities. As a result, we end up eating more than what we need. Make time to enjoy your food without interruptions.