

# Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the American Dietetic Association

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## Eating Right for a Healthy Weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthier weight will contribute to your overall health and well being. The following tips are for adults who want to make changes in their lifestyle and move toward a healthier weight.

### Start with a Plan

Develop a plan for lifelong health, not just short-term weight loss. Don't lose sight of the big picture: achieving overall good health. By putting more emphasis on your health, experts agree that you can raise your overall self-esteem, resulting in healthy eating, weight loss and improved health.

Set healthy, realistic goals. When you make changes step-by-step and set realistic goals, you are more likely to succeed in reaching them. Start with two or three specific, small changes at a time. Track your progress by keeping a food and activity log. When you've turned a healthy change into a habit, reward yourself with a fun activity.

Get a personalized eating plan at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). Your MyPyramid Plan will give you the amounts of each food group you need daily. If you have special dietary needs, consult your healthcare provider or registered dietitian for a customized plan.

### Healthy Eating Tips

Eat at least three meals a day and plan your meals ahead of time. Whether you're eating at home, packing a lunch or eating out, an overall eating plan for the day will help keep you on track.

Balance your plate with the right portions of a variety of foods. Half your plate should be filled with vegetables, one fourth with lean meat, poultry or fish and one fourth with grains. To round out your meal, add a glass of fat-free or low-fat milk and a serving of fruit for dessert.

Try changing from a large dinner plate to a smaller one. It may help you feel satisfied with reduced portions.

Start your meal with low calorie foods like fruits, vegetables and salads. Then move on to the main course and side dishes.



For more information about  
"steps to a healthier weight,"  
visit [www.mypyramid.gov/  
STEPS/stepstohealthierweight.  
html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/STEPS/stepstohealthierweight.html).

Focus on your food. Pick one place to sit down and eat at home. Eating unconsciously while doing other things, like watching TV, may lead to eating more than you think.

Know when you've had enough to eat. Quit before you feel full or stuffed. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your body is getting food. When your brain gets this message, you stop feeling hungry. So, fast eaters—slow down and give your brain a chance to get the word.

Get plenty of fiber from fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains. Fiber can help you feel full longer and lower your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Become portion savvy. Keeping tabs on your portion sizes helps you manage your calorie intake—a must in any effective weight management strategy. Try this: without using a measuring cup, pour what you think is one cup of dry cereal or one-half cup of rice or pasta into a bowl. Now check the actual amount with a measuring cup. How close is your estimate? To make sure your portion sizes are “just right” visit [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov). for healthy eating guidelines in household measures.

Snack smart. Choose snacks by the calories and nutrients they provide. Include snacks as part of your daily calorie allowance and limit portions to one serving. Plan for nutritious snacks to prevent between-meal hunger. Keep portable, healthy snacks in your desk, backpack or car.

### Physical Activity

Find your balance between food and physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness—plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

To help control body weight, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends that adults be physically

active for about 60 minutes a day. You can break up your physical activity into 10 minute sessions throughout the day. If you are currently inactive, you may need to check with your doctor concerning increased physical activity.

### Is It Right For You?

Make sure your weight loss plan is right for you.

Does it include:

- Foods from all five food groups?
- The right number of servings from each group?
- Food you will enjoy eating for the rest of your life?
- Foods you can buy at the supermarket?
- Some of your favorite foods?
- Foods that fit your budget and lifestyle?
- Regular physical activity or exercise?

If the answer is “yes” to all the questions, your weight loss plan is right for you. For names of registered dietitians in your area who can develop a personalized weight management plan, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

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**For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).**



The American Dietetic Association is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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This tip sheet is provided by:

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Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ADA Complete Food & Nutrition Guide.