



Simple Ways to Improve Your Diet

Chances are, if you are like most Americans, you lead a busy life with little or no time to spare. A common result of this type of lifestyle is that your diet may suffer. Take a look at the following questions and answer yes or no when appropriate.

1. Would you rather hit the snooze button than eat breakfast?
2. Would you rather run through the drive thru than prepare dinner after work?
3. Do you find yourself visiting vending machines often to suppress hunger pangs?
4. To save time, do you skip meals and eat one or two large meals?
5. Do you wait until the last minute to decide what to eat and then fall prey to your environment or mood?

If you have answered yes more often than no, you are likely too busy to think about your diet. This, over time, can be a problem. Did you know that despite the hundreds of low fat, low carb and fat free food products in the stores, Americans are gaining more and more weight? The problem is multi-factorial but can be partially attributed to the fact that Americans are relying more on convenience-type foods that can be consumed quickly. These foods may be fast and easy, but are often high in fat and calories.

You might be thinking that you are helpless and cannot change your situation, but this is definitely not true! A few simple steps can help you improve your eating habits.

#1 Plan ahead. If you wait until you are starving, chances are you will fall victim to unhealthy practices almost every time. Thinking about what you will eat beforehand will allow you to plan ahead. For instance, decide on a quick breakfast like a bagel and piece of fruit the night before. Getting it ready beforehand will insure you do not skip this important meal when you are running late.

#2 Seek out low fat items at your favorite restaurants. Even your favorite fast food restaurant will provide a few low fat choices. Of course they may not be what you are used to ordering and may require a special request but most establishments are willing to make modifications to please the customer.

- 3# Set aside time to eat and enjoy your meals.** Even the busiest person should be able to afford to take at least 15 minutes, 3 times each day to sit down and enjoy meals. Eating while doing computer work and other tasks does not count. Limiting distractions and focusing on meals can improve satiety and prevent you from snacking more later on.
- #4 Look for food items with less than 3 grams of fat and 100 calories.** Limiting fat to no more than 30% of total calories is recommended and can be achieved by following this simple rule. The grocery store is the ideal spot to start making healthy choices. A food label provides valuable information that can assist you in eating a healthy diet.
- #5 Bring your own snacks to work.** Loading up on healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, low fat crackers, vanilla wafers, mini bagels, 100% fruit juice, and low fat dairy products can help you during those vulnerable times when you are hungry, but have little time. Keeping this stash in your office or work place will prevent you from visiting the vending machines on a regular basis.

Eating healthfully is a challenge for those people with busy lifestyles but is definitely not impossible. Taking the time to make a few changes can help you improve your diet and maintain your weight. For more information on nutrition and an individualized counseling session, contact your **Health and Wellness Center** or **Dietitian**.

