Eating Right for a Healthy Weight

Are you ready to make changes in your lifestyle and move toward a healthier weight? Here are some tips to get you started.

Set healthy, realistic goals. You are more likely to succeed in reaching your goals when you make changes step-by-step. Start with one or two specific, small changes at a time. For example: "I will pack a salad for lunch at work on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays instead of ordering takeout."

Plan your meals ahead of time. Whether you're eating at home, packing a lunch, or dining out, an overall eating plan for the day will help you stay on track. Use this plan to create a grocery shopping list and stick to it. Avoid impulse purchases that aren't in your plan.

Balance your plate with a variety of foods. Half your plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables, one fourth with lean protein, and one fourth with a wholesome starch or grain. Prioritize fruits and vegetables – these foods are packed with the nutrients your body needs.

Focus on your food. Eating while working, reading, or watching TV may lead to eating more than you think. Also, switching from a large plate to a smaller one may help you feel satisfied with reduced portions.

Eat breakfast. Starting your day with a balanced meal can support healthy blood sugar throughout the day. Without a wholesome breakfast, you may set yourself up for intense hunger later.

Stay Properly Hydrated. Staying hydrated is vital to your overall health. Try choosing mostly water and other unsweetened beverages for hydration. Avoid sugary soft drinks as they are high in calories. Remember to drink more fluids during hot weather or while exercising. Aim for at least 64 ounces per day unless otherwise directed by your medical team.

Snack smart. Snacks can fit into a healthy eating plan if they're planned right. To prevent hunger between meals, choose nutritious foods from the MyPlate food groups. Keep portable, healthy snacks in your desk, backpack, or car.

Check in with your body's hunger signals. Hunger means your body needs energy and it's time to eat. Hunger usually occurs every few hours and can feel like a growling stomach, irritability, lightheadedness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, or low blood sugar levels. Honor your hunger signals and try not to eat in response to other feelings such as stress or boredom.
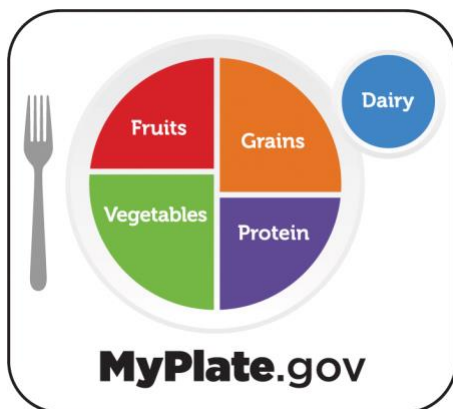
Watch portion sizes to manage your calorie intake. This is the key to an effective weight management plan. To make sure your portion sizes are "just right," visit www.MyPlate.gov for healthy eating guidelines in household measures and refer to the Nutrition Facts Label for serving size information.

Know when you've had enough to eat. Quit eating before you feel overly full. 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 will stop feeling hungry. Eat slowly and give your brain a chance to catch up.