

The 8 Rules of Eating Lead to Successful Weight Control

Only eat when you are sitting at the table.

No eating on the run, in the car, on the street, at the playground, in the park, or while you are in front of the TV. If you are standing up you should not be eating. It's that simple. Simplicity is what makes it easy... but only you can make it work.

Put your fork down between mouthfuls.

Enjoy what you are eating. Relax and give yourself a chance to feel full before your plate is empty.

Teach yourself when to eat.

Structure your life so that you make time for eating healthy meals. Eat while you're sitting down and not while you're rushing off to an appointment.

Healthy does not have to mean boring.

Don't eat the same meals every day. Vary your menus, adding new spices, new tastes, new textures to your meals. The reality is that healthy, low calorie, low fat eating can be just as exciting – and much more energizing – than the high fat, high calorie regimen you were used to before.

Be clear about what you want to eat.

If you are craving something ice cold like ice cream, don't try to talk yourself into a muffin or slice of toast or anything else that isn't cold. You can treat yourself to frozen yogurt and still feel in control. You will also feel satisfied, which means that you will stop eating after the yogurt, rather than seeking out other foods to fulfill your urges.

Eat on a small plate.

Fill the smaller plate, enjoy your food and next feels a moment's guilt about overeating.

No seconds!

As you eat, tell yourself that whatever is on your plate is going to satisfy you. You don't need any more food.

If you need a taste, take a taste.

Keep urges in perspective. When you are confronted with a high calorie food that you really want, take a taste – even a small piece. Allow yourself to have the sensation of tasting that delicious homemade apple pie or fudge brownie or chocolate delight. But as soon as you feel that urge to reach for more, say to yourself, “there is a tomorrow.” Reminding yourself of this is your way of allowing yourself to have another treat again in the future.

Restaurant Dining

It's a lot easier to maintain a healthy eating program at home. But what do you do when you're invited out to eat? Here are some basic rules to follow to help you maintain healthful eating when dining out.

Understand menu language and plan ahead. The menu terms and phrases listed below provide clues about how a food item has been prepared. Review the "red light" (high calorie, high fat) and "green light" (lower in calories and fat) items and remember to choose "green light" items as often as possible.

- Red Light: fried, french fried, hollandaise, alfredo, carbonara, breaded, creamed, creamy, au gratin
- Green Light: baked, broiled, grilled, stir-fried, poached, in tomato/marinara sauce

Practical Tips

- Avoid arriving at the restaurant hungry. It's better to have a snack to subdue your appetite. Then, you are better able to make wise food choices, rather than diving into the breadbasket or chips.
- Review the entire menu. Sometimes, two appetizers make a healthier meal than a full course entrée. If the method of cooking for any item listed isn't noted, ASK how the food is prepared.
- Order sauces and dressings on the side. Also, if the salad is topped with condiments like bacon bits, shredded cheese or croutons, ask to have your salad served without these items. And don't forget to choose low calorie dressings.
- Practice portion control. Most restaurants serve 6-8 ounce portions of meat/fish. Cut your portion in half, remove one half from your plate, and ask for a 'to-go box'. If possible, order half size portions or share an entrée with a friend.

Brown Bag Meals

Brown bagging is an American tradition. But given today's busy lifestyles, many people pack lunches at the last minute. The result? Few food choices and a lunch of stale crackers and dried up cheese! By planning ahead, you can prepare "power packed lunches". Here are a few tips.

- Have sandwich fixings on hand in the freezer. During the weekend, prepare fresh poultry or a lean roast to freeze for later use. Slice the meat and wrap it in 2-3 ounce portions. Thaw it in the microwave in a small amount of broth prior to making your sandwich. You can even freeze the bread for the sandwiches. Lightly toast it prior to packing your lunch. Keep condiments (mustard, salad dressing) in a desk drawer and add them to your sandwiches to give them a "kick". Fresh lettuce, tomato, and onion slices (wrapped separately) can also do the trick.
- Incorporate a variety of flavors and aromas into your meals. Variety is the spice of life. And so it is with eating. Include a wide variety of tastes, textures and temperatures in your meals. For example, bite into fresh fruit or raw vegetables between bites of sandwich. Also, include soup in your meals to slow down your pace of eating while filling you up. If you can, heat up leftovers for lunch; hot meals are more aromatic than cold ones.

By now, you have probably developed the endurance, strength and flexibility to consider adding a sport or recreational activity to your exercise program. Here's a quick review of options to consider.

Swimming

Provided that you swim continuously at a reasonable pace, this is one of the best aerobic activities. In addition, it builds flexibility and strength, too. If you don't know how to swim or would like to improve your technique, consider taking lessons at your nearby health club or YMCA. As with all sports activities, learning proper techniques can enhance your enjoyment of this activity.

Hiking and Cycling

This is a great way to enjoy the great outdoors while building your aerobic fitness. Stretching and strengthening activities for your legs are especially important and good equipment (shoes, boots, bikes) is essential. For a social twist, check local athletic stores or your local newspaper for clubs that offer group hiking and biking programs.

Racquet Sports

These include racquetball, squash and tennis. Handball is similar – but you use a gloved hand rather than a racquet. All of these sports require quick bursts of energy. Racquetball, squash and handball are a bit more aerobic than tennis. Many health clubs have indoor courts so you can play year round. If you prefer not to join a club, public parks often have tennis courts.

Volleyball, Baseball, Softball and Golf

These are great warm weather sports. They generally aren't aerobically demanding, but they offer a great opportunity to socialize while increasing daily activity levels. These sports require flexibility of your upper and lower body, so stretching is especially important. Many recreational center and athletic programs have volleyball and baseball leagues.

Basketball and Soccer

These sports provide good aerobic benefits. Jogging is a good training exercise for these sports, since running is involved. Ball handling skills are important for both sports.

Yoga and Tai Chi

Both of these activities are quiet exercise alternatives that help you increase your flexibility and also incorporate meditation activities providing further stress reduction benefits. Health and wellness centers offer these programs.

Activity

Choose one of the sports or recreational activities above and investigate where and when you could participate in the activity. If equipment is needed, see if you can rent it or visit a reputable athletic store or get advice on the equipment best suited for you and your needs.

If you decide to pursue one of these activities, consider attending a class on proper training and techniques for the sport/activity you have chosen. Health clubs, recreational centers, TMCA and local colleges/universities usually offer instructional exercise programs. If you choose to add one of these sports or recreational activities to your exercise program, you can substitute it for your usual walking session.

If not, continue your walking program! Continue to walk 4 times per week, 40 minute each session. Try carrying a light weight (1-3 lbs.) in each hand as you walk. And if you have the urge to walk longer, do it!

Continue to monitor your heart rate. Adjust your activity as needed – walk faster to increase your heart rate, and slow down if you heart rate is too high.