

Setting Up Your Food Plan

- ✓ Consider the timing and balance of your meals. Aim for a balance of nutrients including some whole grains, protein, and healthy fats. Include fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Balanced meals digest in 3-5 hours, on average. So try not to go longer than 4-5 hours between meals.
- ✓ By ending your meal when you feel comfortable vs. full, you may notice you become hungry sooner. So having a “mini-meal” between meals can be an intelligent decision. Eat until you are 80% full vs. 100% full.



- ✓ Eat more slowly. If you take the time to savor and enjoy each meal, food will become much more satisfying. Plan on taking at least 20 minutes to complete a meal. This is time for your brain to get the signal that you have had enough to eat. Eating faster than this will increase the chance of overeating.
- ✓ Practice awareness and mindfulness so you are truly present when you eat your meals/snacks. Most of us eat without being conscious of the eating experience as a whole, without taking time to enjoy how food tastes, noticing its textures, color, and temperature. Assess your appetite and hunger both before and after eating your meals and snack.
- ✓ Meals or snacks that are composed primarily of carbohydrate-rich foods (breads, cereals, pasta, pretzels, fruit, etc.) will digest, on average, in an hour or two. Protein-rich foods (fish, chicken, dairy, beans, soy, red meat), digest in 3-4 hours on average, and fat-rich foods (cheese, oil, nuts, butter, French fries) can take 5 hours or more to digest—it is all dependent upon the portion of food eaten and the calorie density of the meal. But mixed meals, as you can see, can help keep you feeling full for a longer period of time. Try to limit refined and processed foods as much as possible.
- ✓ Fiber-rich foods (fruit, vegetables, WHOLE grains, beans, soybeans, bran cereals) help fill you up faster, on fewer calories, and keep you feeling full for a longer period of time. Fiber helps with weight control in this way. As if that wasn't enough, fiber-rich foods also offer significantly greater nutritional value than foods that have been more refined and processed. So add bulk to your meals with fiber-rich foods.
- ✓ Be sure to drink adequate fluids throughout the day. People will often eat more on days they are thirsty because food serves as a source of fluid (even bread is about 30% water!) Keeping hydrated also helps with weight loss because it increases your metabolism. Any fluid that does not contain caffeine or alcohol can count toward fluid requirements. The recommendation is 6-8 *eight-ounce* glasses of fluid daily (or 4 cups per 1000 calories consumed.)



- ✓ Avoid eating in front of the TV or computer or while driving. Make eating an experience to be enjoyed. Set up a beautiful table, light candles and listen to calming music. Be mindful about your eating but if you do want to have dinner in front of the TV make sure you take the time to fully enjoy it.



- ✓ Don't get overly hungry! This is one of the biggest mistakes people make when they are trying to lose weight. This will sabotage weight loss efforts by slowing down your metabolism and making it especially difficult to control your eating at your next meal.
- ✓ Don't deprive yourself of foods you really love. Instead, build in times in your eating program when you can include them without over-eating. Having a chocolate chip cookie after dinner instead of in the middle of the afternoon when you are ravenous, will help you enjoy those foods that are higher in fat and calories without overdoing it. Deprivation is not a good long-term strategy.
- ✓ Be consistent – it's what you do on a consistent basis that really adds up. Set realistic goals and expectations. If you stick with your new lifestyle, the results you want will follow. Focus on the long-term approach. Put your intentions to the test of 2's. Will I be able to stick with this dietary/behavior change 2 years from now and not just for the next 2 days or 2 weeks.
- ✓ Create a positive association with change. Start with changing the relatively easy areas first, rather than trying to tackle the biggest areas of struggle first. As you incorporate small changes into your lifestyle you will be pleasantly surprised at how making small changes allows you to move on to bigger changes with relative ease.
- ✓ Take care of your needs – emotional, physical and spiritual. Neglect of these areas may lead to compensating with food.
- ✓ Observe your behaviors and learn from your mistakes. What will you do differently next time? Learn from your mistakes and then MOVE ON! Learn the gentle art of self-forgiveness. Slip-ups are not necessarily negative. They can be valuable teaching tools. What message do you need to understand? We're all human.
- ✓ Redefine "good." Overly restrictive eating is not being "good." Eating a cookie is not being "bad." This is not a moral issue. It is a learning experience.
- ✓ Weight loss is a process, not an end result. It will fluctuate over time. Some days are easier than others. Your goal weight will require a certain amount of time, attention and effort to sustain.

So when putting meals together, remember the following components:

- Fiber-rich foods
- Protein-rich foods
- A little healthy fat
- Fluids (water)

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