



Eating healthy foods can improve your overall health, help you manage your weight, increase your energy level, and prevent many chronic diseases. Healthy eating means different things to different people, such as:

- Eating more fresh, seasonal, and local produce from nearby farmer’s markets.
- Reducing unhealthy fats and sodium to lower the risk of heart disease or stroke.
- Eating more organic, natural, or unprocessed foods.
- Reducing unhealthy snacks, and finding healthier fast food options.

Whatever your goals for healthier eating, learn how to start making changes—and how to enjoy them, too!

What is a healthy diet?

Eating well doesn’t have to be hard or take the pleasure out of food. In fact, enjoying your meals is what makes healthy eating fun—and this will make you more likely to stick with it.

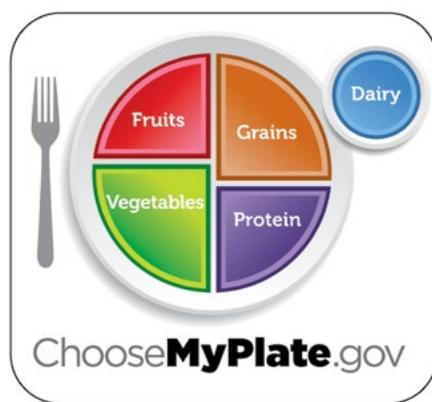
Try to eat more:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains like whole-wheat bread and brown rice
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Unsweetened dairy products
- Fish and lean meats

Try to eat less:

- Fatty meats like sausage, hamburgers and poultry with skin
- Processed snacks like chips, cookies, and cakes
- Fried foods
- Sweetened beverages like sodas, fruit drinks, and lattes

How can I improve what I eat?



Plan your plate:

- Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Divide the other half equally between lean protein and whole grains.

Between meals, choose snacks with fiber, like fruits, nuts, or whole grains. These foods will satisfy you longer than processed snacks or sweet treats.

Control your portion sizes:

- A portion of rice or pasta is smaller than you think—just ½ cup or the size of a tennis ball.
- A piece of bread or a tortilla should be around the size of a CD.
- A 3-ounce serving of meat or fish is about the size of a deck of cards.

Remember that one tablespoon of peanut butter is about the size of half a golf ball.

Focus on fruits and vegetables:

- Add one extra fruit or vegetable to your diet each day until you have reached 5 or more.
- Choose a rainbow of colorful fruits and vegetables, either fresh, frozen, or dried.
- Add flavor to vegetable dishes with a sprinkle of olive oil, herbs and spices, or a little grated cheese.

If you choose canned products, look for low-salt vegetables and fruit canned in juice rather than in syrup.

Choose lean proteins:

- Eat meat, poultry, or fish that’s been roasted, baked, or broiled without the skin.
- Choose smaller portions of lean red meats and eat them less often.

Beans, peas, lentils, and nuts are also a good source of protein, so eat them more often.

Check labels to avoid trans fats and reduce sodium:

- Avoid partially hydrogenated oils or trans fats, which are found in some margarines, processed snacks like crackers, chips and cookies, and deep-fried foods.

- Cook with healthy oils, such as olive or canola oil, and use a trans-fat-free margarine. Try avocado slices or nuts in salads.

Most of us eat too much sodium, so check the food label. Less than 140 mg per serving means it's a low-sodium food. Processed and canned foods tend to be highest in sodium.

How can I get started?

Making changes can be hard. But when it comes to taking care of yourself, it's worth the effort.

Am I ready?

Before you start making changes, take some time to think about this question: *How ready am I to make changes in my life so I can eat healthier?*



On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all ready and 10 means totally ready, where are you?

If you're at 0 to 3, what would need to change for you to feel more ready?

If you're at 4 to 6, what are some advantages of changing? Or of not changing? What can you do to make changing easier?

If you're at 7 to 10, how will you make these changes enjoyable so you'll stick with them?

Small changes add up

Remember, you're working toward a healthy lifestyle, not a "quick fix." Start with one change at a time that you'll enjoy and continue. Set a small, achievable goal and work on it for 1 to 2 weeks. After that, start on another small change, and build on your success.

Avoid temptation

If it's not in your cupboard, you won't be tempted. Make a grocery list to help you buy healthier foods. Substitute healthier choices (such as fresh fruit) for foods with lots of added sugar. Read labels. Try not to shop when you're hungry.

Get support

If your friends and family are making changes too, you can support one another by trying new, healthy recipes. You may also find support at health education classes, or through online communities. If you have an ongoing medical condition, your doctor may refer you to a registered dietitian for your specific needs.

How can I succeed over the long term?

Be adventurous

Include variety in the foods you choose. Besides the nutritional benefits, variety makes meals and snacks interesting and fun. Learn new ways to prepare vegetables and whole grains. Try new spices and herbs. Look up healthy recipes on the Internet, or find new cookbooks.

Be selective when eating out

- Look for dishes that are steamed, broiled, baked, grilled, poached, or roasted.
- Ask for salad dressings, sauces, and gravies on the side.
- Most restaurants serve extra-large portions, so plan on taking home leftovers. You can even wrap up half your meal before you begin eating, so you can "clean your plate" without overdoing it.

At fast-food venues, do the same by looking for healthier choices. Review the nutrition facts on the menu board or on the restaurant's website.

Moderation is key

Don't forbid yourself from eating your favorite foods. Eat them in smaller portions and less often. If you eat a piece of birthday cake, enjoy it.

Eat mindfully

Many of us rush through our meals without truly enjoying them. Mindful eating means taking the time to truly appreciate our food.

- Ask yourself if you're actually hungry before eating.
- If you're bored, sad, or stressed, try another activity like going for a walk, reading a book, or calling a friend.
- As you eat, savor the flavors and aromas. Take small bites and be grateful for the nutrients and energy the food brings you.
- Listen to your body while eating and stop when you're satisfied.

Additional Resources

- Visit kp.org/mydoctor/healthyweight or contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- Get support while reaching your goals. Call **(866) 251-4514** to schedule a wellness coaching appointment.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.