

“Get Your Plate in Shape”

Week 2: All about food choices

What about food choices?

(Refer to page 2 of the *Activity & Eating booklet*)

How do you decide which foods you want to eat? Do you prioritize taste, convenience or cost?

Many people choose the foods they eat based on immediate gratification, without much thought about the long-term effects of their selections. This behavior often results in choosing foods that taste good, but are not good for you. When you choose your foods, be sure to consider the *nutrient richness* of the foods. Nutrient-rich foods have substantial amounts of nutrients for relatively few calories.

Choosing nutrient-rich foods at the grocery store is easy if you fill your cart with low-fat milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats, beans and nuts. Next time you're in the grocery store, pick up a nutrient-rich food that you've never cooked with before. What you pick doesn't have to be exotic – try using versatile foods like whole grain pasta, Greek yogurt, frozen blueberries, spinach or skinless chicken breast.



Start your day with breakfast

Some people skip breakfast in an effort to lose weight, but that practice is likely to backfire! Skipping breakfast is strongly linked to the development of obesity. Studies show that overweight and obese children, adolescents, and adults are less likely to consume breakfast each morning than their thinner counterparts.

According to research, skipping meals, especially breakfast, can actually make weight control more difficult. Breakfast skippers tend to eat more food than usual at the next meal, or nibble on high-calorie snacks to stave off hunger later.

Here's a link to a slideshow with helpful and interesting information on fast food breakfasts:

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/ss/slideshow-best-and-worst-fast-food-breakfasts>

A quick, nutrient-rich breakfast idea is a smoothie. This link has lots of smoothie recipes:

<http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/smoothie-recipes-directory?catid=1021>

Home-cooked meals (Information from myOptumHealth.com)

Busy family schedules and late work nights are common excuses for eating out. That means more trips to restaurants or last-minute take-out meals.

But if your stove is gathering dust, your wallet and your waistline may not be the only things suffering. Dining out frequently can take a toll on your long-term health. Cooking at home offers many forgotten benefits. The next time you're tempted to leave the cooking to someone else, consider how eating out will affect you and your family.

Here are some things to think about:

What you see is what you get

At home; you know exactly what ingredients are used to prepare your meal. You also have total control of what ingredients are added.

Portion control

Restaurants are known for huge portions. Sure, you may be able to bring home a doggie bag, but will you have the discipline to stop eating when there is still food on the plate? When serving at home, it's easier to dole out a smaller portion - knowing you can go back for more.

Healthier options

Many restaurants offer a few healthy meals, but the temptation to order higher-fat or higher-calorie options can win out in the end. When you cook nutritious meals at home, you can eliminate the extra temptation.

Money savings

Eating out all the time is expensive. Serving a salad, spaghetti with meatballs and pouring glasses of milk at home to a family of four will cost you about \$20. Going out for the same meal will be at least double to triple that price.

Time savings

Eating at home can be more of a timesaver than eating out. If you have a well-stocked kitchen, you can cook up an easy meal in minutes. And by cooking extra, you can save your leftovers for a quick and easy lunch or dinner the next day.

Long-term health care savings

Consistently eating high-calorie foods with few nutrients can lead to obesity and heart disease, among other chronic issues. Eating healthier, home-cooked meals and adopting a healthier lifestyle will leave you less likely to develop these health conditions. This can save you a lot of money in the future on costs related to health care and prescriptions.

To familiarize yourself with quick and simple recipes that do not skimp on taste, visit:

<http://www.mealsmatter.org/RecipesAndMeals/QuickMeals/>

