

## Think Moderation

Food, glorious food! We can't live without it. Learning to live with it, however, can be challenging in today's society. Food choices are everywhere, and we all enjoy eating. When it comes to food, too much (or too little) of a good thing can create health problems. The **principle of moderation** can help each person enjoy a variety of food and learn to eat in healthy ways.

The main purpose for eating food is to provide the body with the nutrients and energy it needs to survive and function. Often people forget about eating what they need and focus only on eating what they want. Finding the right balance between food needs and wants is the key.

People start making their own food choices when they are very young. Little children tend to make decisions based on taste and texture. School-age children learn about nutrition and how to evaluate the foods they eat throughout the day. Everyone has special likes and dislikes, but foods high in solid fats, added sugar or salt are often enjoyed the most.

Making a healthy food choice is not always easy. No one wants to give up a favorite food. If individuals follow the **principle of moderation**, they don't have to eliminate the "extra" foods they love, which may be higher in solid fats, added sugar or salt. But they must pay attention to the serving size and how often they eat the "extra" food.

The word **moderate** means *not extreme or excessive*. A moderate temperature is not too hot or too cold. A moderate amount is not too much and not too little. A moderate serving size is not too big or too small. **Moderate** also means *keeping within reasonable limits*.

The **principle of moderation** does not replace the principle of a healthy diet. Individuals should always eat a variety of nutritious foods every day. No single food should ever replace the different healthy foods a body needs. Those who don't get enough nutritious food can expect to have health problems.

The **principle of moderation** requires individuals to think about the nutritional value of what they are eating and how much they are eating. Portion size is very important. Any excessive eating habits can have unhealthy results. Individuals who regularly eat oversized servings can expect to gain weight. Moderation means that "extra" foods should be chosen less often or eaten in smaller quantities. Foods that are high in solid fats, added sugar or salt can be eaten, but only in moderate amounts.

It takes knowledge, thought, and practice to make healthy food choices. When confronted with hard decisions, think moderation and then choose wisely. Make eating in moderation a healthy habit to balance your food needs and wants.