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The Best Winter Foods for Kids



When the temperatures drop and the daylight hours are shorter, energy levels can take a big dip, right along with mood. Kids might be less active in the cold, winter months, making it extra important to focus on adequate nutrition this time of year. And while it hasn't been well-studied in children, kids could experience Seasonal Affective Disorder, which is a type of depression with a seasonal pattern, just like adults. Changes in mood, energy, focus, appetite and sleep are some common signs. These foods will help your kids stay healthy — and happy — this winter.

Salmon

The tryptophan in salmon and other animal proteins is a precursor to serotonin, a neurotransmitter associated with mood regulation. Salmon is also packed with omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown in some studies to help manage depression. Some kids will eat salmon broiled or grilled — try using a marinade or sauce they love on other foods — or cut the fish into small pieces and make kebabs with veggies.

Clementines

Clementines are an adorable winter citrus packed with vitamin C and fiber. They also contain calcium, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium for strong bones and good muscle function. Kids love that they're usually seedless, easy to peel and fun to eat, making them perfect for school lunchboxes or snacks. You can also toss the sections into salads to make greens more appealing.

Winter Squash

Winter squash is rich in vitamin A and carotenoids, which have been shown to benefit heart health and immunity while promoting healthy skin. They're also a good source of fiber, which helps keep blood sugar levels stable.

Lisa Brown, MS, RDN, CDN, a registered dietitian in New York City, encourages parents to make winter squash part of the regular rotation. "Most winter squash varieties are naturally sweet, and what kid doesn't like sweet? Try roasting butternut squash and tossing with cinnamon and maple syrup," she says. "You can also mix spaghetti squash with your kid's favorite pasta sauce."

Sweet Potatoes

Another great source of fiber, sweet potatoes are also packed with vitamin A and potassium. Their mellow, sweet taste works in all kinds of recipes. Slice into thin "coins" and toss with canola or olive oil before roasting. Sweet potato puree can also be used in foods like macaroni and cheese, oatmeal and brownies. Pediatric dietitian Laura Gibofsky, MS, RD, CDN, suggests swapping in baked sweet potatoes as an alternative to french fries. "Have your kids help with peeling so they're involved in the cooking," she says.

Cauliflower

This member of the cruciferous veggie family has been noted for its high phytochemical content and potential to help prevent cancer and inflammation. Cauliflower is delicious on its own but easily blends with other flavors. It's rich in vitamins A, C and K, as well as many B-vitamin. But that's not all. Cauliflower provides a small amount of protein (1.1 gram per serving), plus potassium, magnesium and manganese — important for growth and development — while the fiber promotes stable energy levels and good digestion.

Cauliflower is delicious roasted, but if your kid is averse to eating veggies, Brown has some creative ideas. Try making cauliflower "rice" in a food processor and adding it to stir-fries, she suggests.

"You can also use riced cauliflower for pancakes," says Brown. "Just microwave for 45 seconds, then blend it into the batter." Don't worry, the pancakes don't taste like cauliflower!

Reviewed January 2015 Jessica Cording, MS, RD, CDN, is a registered dietitian and writer in New York City. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.



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Eat Right this Year



Each January, millions of Americans make resolutions to eat more healthfully and lose weight, but many lose steam along the way. If you have trouble keeping your resolutions or meeting your goals, make this the year you create a solid plan that sets you up for success!

Start by Assessing Your Food Choices and Lifestyle

Keep track of what you eat and drink and how much physical activity you get so you can identify behaviors you would like to change.

One Large Goal can Seem Overwhelming

Break big goals into smaller, more specific goals, and include a list of realistic changes in your daily routine to achieve these specific goals. For instance, divide big and vague goals like "I will eat better" into smaller, more specific goals like "I will eat one more piece of fruit per day." Remember, while your goals should be challenging, they should also be reachable.

Make Sure the Goals You Set are Measurable

The goals must provide answers to "How much?" or "How many?" so you can easily review and track your progress. Evaluate your progress every week or two, and update your plan based upon your current progress or circumstances. Make sure you are giving yourself enough time to achieve each smaller goal so you are not discouraged if you haven't met them.

Seek Help from a Qualified Health Professional

A registered dietitian nutritionist is your best source of reliable and up-to-date food and nutrition information. An RDN also can help you determine measurable and achievable goals, as well as a plan to help you achieve them and support along the way.

For more information on how to stick to a healthy weight-loss plan this year, [find an RDN in your area](#).

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5 Ways to Stretch Your Dollar at the Grocery Store



Stay within your grocery budget while feeding your family right with these five tips.

1. **Buy in bulk when items go on sale.** Browse your grocery aisles for sale items and stock up on foods you can store in the pantry and freezer. Load your cart with non-perishables such as canned and bottled goods, dried beans and peas, whole-grain pastas, crackers and cereals, brown rice, tomato sauces and nut butters. Plan to fill your freezer with frozen fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and poultry. If you're thinking of bulk buying perishables that are on sale, such as fresh produce, dairy products or raw beef, chicken and seafood, "Check the expiration date and if you don't think your family can realistically consume that food before then, or you don't have the freezer space to store it, give it a pass," says Melissa Joy Dobbins, MS, RDN, LD, CDE, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
2. **Try canned and frozen products.** Canned and frozen foods can be less expensive than fresh. They're great to have on hand when you run out of food in your refrigerator. Don't worry about compromising on nutrition; fruits and vegetables are canned or frozen at their peak of nutrition and quality. Do watch out for high sodium content in canned goods. Dobbins suggests looking for brands with "no salt added" or that are listed as having "reduced sodium." Canned food is safe as long as the container isn't swollen, damaged, rusted or dented. Although many canned foods are coded with "use by" dates, you should rotate your supply at least every other year.
3. **Use a slow cooker.** This handy piece of kitchen equipment uses a moist heat method of cooking which helps tenderize less expensive but tougher cuts of meat. Dobbins says you can stretch that meat dollar further by adding frozen vegetables or beans to your slow cooker recipes. Meals from a slow cooker are hearty and filling, and they make the house smell good!
4. **Cook meals in large batches, then freeze for later.** "I always double or triple a recipe so I don't have to cook again during the week," says Dobbins. Batch cook and freeze meals over the weekend when you have more time. On weekdays, all you have to do is take a meal out of the freezer and simply reheat. You also can use leftovers from a roast or chicken to make a

stir fry, tacos or soup other days of the week. The more meals you make at home instead of going out, the more money you save.

5. **Take advantage of store loyalty cards, store brands, coupons and in-store specials.** If you haven't signed up yet for your grocery store's loyalty card, do it now. Often sale prices are only valid with the loyalty card and you could miss out on big savings. Consider purchasing the store brand version of packaged foods — they are usually a better buy than commercially branded items. Scan your newspaper and weekly store circulars for sales and coupons for items you regularly purchase. Also, try company websites for coupons. Check for in-store deals like "manager's specials" of day-old baked goods or foods close to their expiration date.

Reviewed April 2013. By Andrea Giancoli, MPH, RD. Published February 10, 2014. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.



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Cooking Tips for One or Two



It can be tricky when cooking for one (or even two) to make the most of your ingredients and to minimize dishes — particularly when many recipes focus on making a meal for a family and serve four to six people. But just because you have a smaller household doesn't mean you should abandon the kitchen for takeout.

"The best part of cooking for one is that there are no worries about what anyone else wants for dinner. You have the flexibility to enjoy beans with salsa and avocado or a quick omelet with veggies for dinner if you want," says Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Spokesperson Marisa Moore, MBA, RDN, LD.

The first step to dinner-for-one success is to make cooking healthy meals a priority. Planning ahead and arming yourself with a few tips and tricks will put you on the path to triumph in the kitchen.

According to Moore, the best strategy when cooking for one is to become friends with your freezer. "Instead of scaling down, cook up full recipes: cook once, eat twice. Save time, money and clean up

by freezing soups, chili, pasta dishes and extra vegetables," she says. "Pull these 'frozen meals' out when you don't feel like cooking or just need a quick meal."

Here are more kitchen tips for one:

Grains

- Cook a batch of whole grains such as brown rice or barley and freeze in individual portions using a muffin pan. Once frozen, the discs can be stored in a zip-top bag.
- Have a six-pack of whole-grain English muffins or a whole loaf of bread? Tuck those extras into the freezer for another day; wrap them tightly in plastic wrap to prevent freezer burn.
- Visit the bulk bins at your local health food and grocery stores. You can buy exactly what you need with no waste and it's often less expensive per pound. In addition to grains, you can score a deal on dried herbs and spices as well as nuts, seeds and dried beans.

Veggies and Fruits

- "If you're not able to go food shopping a few days a week (most of us aren't), embrace frozen produce," says Moore. "Frozen produce can be just as nutritious as fresh and it's there when you need it. Just choose options without added sauces and sugar." Since they're already chopped up, frozen fruits and veggies are ready to add to smoothies, soups and stir-fries. And because they're frozen, there is no rush to use them before they spoil.
- Bulk bags of fruits and veggies are only a better deal if you eat them before they spoil. Only buy what you can reasonably eat before the produce perishes: take extra grapes or cherries out of the bag and pare down that bunch of bananas to what you'll eat.
- "Be strategic. Enjoy your most perishable fresh produce like berries and spinach early in the week. Save heartier produce like cabbage, carrots and potatoes for meals later in the week," suggests Moore.

Protein: Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Beans

- Eggs can make a meal happen in a flash, anytime! They are an excellent source of protein and contain a bounty of nutrients such as vitamin D and choline. You can hard-boil a few on the weekend to have as an easy breakfast, snack or quick salad addition.
- Buy a whole package of meat or poultry and wrap individual portions in freezer-safe paper; label each with the date and contents.
- A potato masher can easily tame a can of pinto beans into delicious refried beans — a pinch of cumin, garlic and chili powder and you're ready to eat!

Reviewed November 2014 Holly Larson, MS, RD, is a nutrition expert, freelance writer and owner of Grass Roots Nutrition based in Oxford, OH. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.



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Family Exercise Ideas for Every Season



The key to an active family is finding fun things to do in every season. Aim for a goal of 30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for kids of moderate activity daily — no matter the weather!

Winter Workouts

The big, bulky clothes of winter often provide more than just warmth; they give us a place to hide the extra winter weight we're carrying! Once the weather turns cold, snow and ice can make jogging and bike riding difficult — and even unsafe! Don't let the cold months of winter be an excuse to cut back on your exercise routine. Consider these calorie-burning indoor activities:

- Walk your local mall.
- Take the stairs whenever possible instead of an elevator or escalator.
- Walk around your building's hallways during your lunch or coffee break.
- Don't wait for spring for a thorough house cleaning. Wash the inside of your windows, vacuum or shampoo the carpet, or clean out your closets.
- Watch and follow an exercise video or DVD rather than a movie.

Cold weather doesn't mean you have to say good-bye to all outdoor activity. There are many ways to enjoy the weather by taking your physical activity outdoors. Why should kids have all the fun in the winter?

- Have a snowball fight.
- Go ice skating.
- Go sledding.
- Make snow angels.

Spring Into Action

To get in shape for spring and summer, you don't need to do everything at once. Put one or two changes into practice, such as controlling your portion sizes or cutting back on added fats and sugars in your food choices. When you feel comfortable with your progress, try something else.

Add physical activity to your day. Spring weather makes it easy to get outdoors and get your recommended amount of daily physical activity. These activities can count toward your day's total exercise:

- Go for a brisk walk during your lunch hour or after dinner.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator whenever possible.
- Skip the drive-thru car wash and wash the car yourself.
- Stretch your green thumb by doing some gardening. Consider growing your own fruit, vegetables and herbs.
- Walk in place while watching TV.
- When possible, ride your bike to school or work — or use it to run errands.
- Plan an active family vacation or a weekend outing.

Like good eating habits, regular physical activity needs to be part of everyone's healthful lifestyle. Remember, your goal is to make changes gradually so you can stick with them and won't have to repeat this process next year.

Summer Activity is Crucial for Children

A study in the July 2007 *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* suggests physical fitness gains made by obese children who participated in a lifestyle-focused physical education class during the school year were lost after the three-month summer break.

Don't let your child spend his summer sitting on the couch. Teach him or her to enjoy the benefits of being physically active. Help your child stay fit this summer with these ideas:

- Sign your child up for a local sports camp or swimming lessons.
- Make going for a walk, run or bike ride together a scheduled event.
- Go hiking and have the kids tell you 10 points of natural interest to enjoy.
- Take up a new hobby together, such as inline skating, tennis or hiking.
- Run through the sprinkler when it's hot outside.
- When it's raining, stay inside, turn on some music and have a dance party.
- Set up neighborhood contests including jump rope, hula hoop or hopscotch.
- Organize community kickball, soccer or softball games or relay races.
- Host a bicycle or dog wash on your street.

Being active now also helps reduce their risk of chronic health problems later in life. Encourage your kids to engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Teaching the importance of physical activity while your kids are young will help them maintain the habit when they're older.

Enjoy Autumn Activities

Fall weekends are a great time for physical activity, which can counter the effects of the harvest season and the bounty of holiday food. Get outside and enjoy autumn with a brisk run, a nature hike or a game of football. Weekend athletes may not have the same nutritional demands of full-time athletes, but you still need to fuel your body for outdoor activities.

If you're planning some physical fun during fall weekends, power up beforehand. Eat a meal three to four hours before a workout and a small snack about an hour prior. This helps ensure the energy is in your muscles when you need it.

Eat meals with protein and carbohydrates: a lean deli meat sandwich, cereal with fruit and low-fat milk or pasta with meat sauce. For your pre-activity snack, eat something low-fat and low-fiber, such as a cup of low-fat yogurt or a piece of fruit.

Refuel afterward with similar food combinations, in portions that are right for your body size. And, of course, remember to drink plenty of fluids.

Don't Let Exercise Take a Holiday

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season may make it hard to stick to your workout routine, but always make exercise a priority. Good options include walking, biking, running, ice skating or stair climbing. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise daily. If you don't currently have a workout routine, there is no time like the present to get started.

Whatever activity you choose, you'll burn extra calories instead of storing them.

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Discover the Health Benefits of Produce



Research suggests eating enough fruits and vegetables is linked to a lower risk of many chronic diseases and may help protect against certain types of cancer. Despite these health benefits, most people don't eat enough produce. It's a shame, too, because when prepared without adding fats or sugars, fruits and vegetables are relatively low in calories. As a result, eating more of them may help you achieve and keep your healthy weight.

Whether fresh, frozen, canned or dried, fruits and vegetables are major sources of nutrients we need — but we often don't eat enough of them. Since the nutrients in fruits and vegetables vary, it's important to eat a variety. Opt for dark-green, red and orange vegetables, and beans and peas.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend filling half your plate with vegetables and fruit. Here are some tips on how you can add more produce to your meals:

- Keep frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetables on hand, especially when fresh produce isn't in season. Buy canned fruit that's packed in juice for less added sugars and calories, and choose low-sodium canned vegetables.
- Try new types of fruits and vegetables and prepare them in different ways. Texture is everything when it comes to sandwiches, so experiment with veggie toppings such as raw cucumber, avocado slices or pickled carrots. Add flavor to breakfast by topping oatmeal, frozen waffles or cereal with berries or banana slices. Create a guilt-free dessert with fresh fruit or serve it as a topping on low-fat yogurt.
- Many children and young adults drink more than half of their fruit as juice, which often contains a significant amount of added sugar. Whole fruit contains fiber and other nutrients without the added sugar. When drinking juice, make sure it is 100-percent juice, without the added sugars.

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Choose Healthy Fats



Fat is a nutrient necessary for your health. While various fats in foods have different effects on health, some fats offer health-protective benefits. Consider including foods with these fats, in moderation, to your meals.

Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fatty acids that may help lower cholesterol levels and support heart health.

What to Eat

Fatty Fish: Current dietary recommendations are to include fish in your meals at least twice a week. Fish high in omega-3 fats are salmon, albacore tuna (fresh and canned), sardines, lake trout and mackerel.

Walnuts: Walnuts are rich in vitamin E and an excellent plant-based source of omega-3. Add walnuts to cereal, salads or muffins. Try walnut oil in salad dressings and sautés, too.

All Vegetable Oils: Replace solid fats such as butter or margarine with oils when cooking or baking. It works well for sautéing and stir-frying.

Flaxseed: Add ground flaxseed to breakfast cereal, yogurt, baked goods including breads and muffins or mixed dishes and casseroles. Or, drizzle flaxseed oil over quinoa or use it for salad dressing. (Your body cannot break down whole flaxseeds to access the omega-3-containing oil.)

Eggs: Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will contain more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label.

Monounsaturated Fats

Monounsaturated fats improve blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease your risk of heart disease.

What to Eat

Nuts: In addition to heart-healthy fats, nuts are a good source of protein, fiber and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Just keep portion control in mind. One portion of nuts is equal to 1 ounce or $\frac{1}{3}$ cup and provides approximately 160 to 180 calories.

Oils: Use oils in place of saturated fat, such as butter. Use it in salad dressing or to sauté vegetables, seafood, poultry and meat.

Avocado: Avocados not only contain monounsaturated fat, but they are also packed with folate, vitamins E, C and B6, potassium and fiber. Try adding avocado to salad, pizza, soup, salsa, eggs and sandwiches.

Peanut Butter: Nearly half the fat in peanut butter is monounsaturated fat. Resist the urge to pour off the heart-healthy oil that's separated out of natural peanut butter, and mix it in.

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Healthy Nutrition for Healthy Teeth



Daily brushing with fluoride toothpaste and flossing are essential to a healthy smile, but did you know nutrition has an effect on your dental health, too?

Eating a variety of nutrient-rich foods from all the food groups promotes healthy teeth and gums. A balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, low-fat dairy products and whole grains provide essential nutrients for optimum oral health as well as overall health.

For example:

Calcium-rich foods, such as low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and cheese; fortified soy drinks and tofu; canned salmon; almonds; and dark green leafy vegetables help promote strong teeth and as well as bones.

Phosphorus, found in eggs, fish, lean meat and dairy products, is good for strong teeth.

Vitamin C promotes gum health, so eat plenty of citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, potatoes and spinach.

Smart snacking can also keep your mouth in good shape. Resist the urge to snack frequently — the more often you eat, especially in between meals, the more likely you are to introduce acid attacks on your teeth. If you do snack, choose wisely. Forgo sugary treats such as hard or sticky candy and opt for nutritious choices like raw vegetables, fruits (an apple a day!), plain yogurt, cheese, milk and popcorn. Remember to brush after snacking to keep cavities at bay. If you can't brush, rinse your mouth with water to get rid of food particles.

Caring for a baby? Avoid pacifying your infant, toddler or young child with a bottle of juice, formula or milk. Sucking on the bottle bathes the teeth and gums in liquid which can contribute to tooth decay.

In addition to healthful eating, oral health problems can be prevented by practicing good oral hygiene, such as brushing teeth with fluoridated toothpaste twice a day; flossing once a day; drinking fluoridated water; and seeking regular oral health care.

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7 Kitchen Staples for Teen-Friendly Meals



If you have teenage children, you've heard it before: "There's nothing to eat in this house!" Sure, you can do your part by buying lots of healthy foods. But your teen can get involved too, by helping to prepare some of those foods. Why? "When teens learn cooking skills at home, they'll be less likely to eat unhealthy fast food or unbalanced meals when they become responsible for their own food choices after they leave home," says Sonya Angelone, MS, RDN.

To help your teen get cooking, stock your kitchen with these easy-to-prepare staples.

Popcorn

What teen doesn't crave crunchy snacks? Skip the chips and pretzels and invest in a popcorn popper. Popcorn is a whole grain, plus it's loaded with fiber for a healthy digestive system. Three air-popped cups deliver nearly four grams of fiber.

Canned Beans

"When it comes to making a quick meal, it doesn't get much easier than canned beans," says Angelone. "Just rinse, drain and heat!" They're perfect for burritos, mashed on a tortilla, or added to canned soup for extra protein.

Nut Butters

Even if your teen has no clue how to cook, that doesn't mean he or she can't whip up a simple meal or snack. Nut and seed butters — such as peanut, almond, soy or sunflower butter — are all perfect no-fuss foods for the novice cook. They're a cinch to spread on French toast with sliced bananas or make a tasty dip for apples, celery or red pepper strips.

Eggs

Whether fried, scrambled or hard-boiled, eggs are an ideal food for teen cooks, says Toby Amidor, MS, RD. "They're simple, delicious and filled with nutrients teens need such as protein for growth and choline for brain health."

Prepped Vegetables

It doesn't matter whether they're fresh, frozen or canned, the more pre-prepped vegetables you have on hand, the more likely your teen will eat them. Think pre-cut baby carrots and grape tomatoes for snacks, frozen edamame and peas to add to pasta and diced tomatoes for chili.

Grains

Busy teens don't have a lot of time to spend in the kitchen, but that doesn't mean dinner has to be a sandwich. Quick-cooking whole grains such as quinoa, instant brown rice and whole-wheat couscous take less than 15 minutes from start to finish. For a speedy meal, teens can toss cooked whole grains with microwaved frozen vegetables and season them with reduced-sodium soy sauce.

Lean Protein

When you teach teens basic cooking techniques you'll be amazed by how quickly they catch on. Start by showing them how to grill, bake or broil marinated chicken, fish or beef. Or, demonstrate how to sauté ground chicken or turkey to add to spaghetti sauce, chili or tacos.

Before you know it, your teen will be telling *you* what's for dinner.

Reviewed January 2016 Karen Ansel, MS, RDN, CDN is a nutrition consultant, journalist and author specializing in nutrition, health and wellness. By Karen Ansel, MS, RDN, CDN. Published January 19, 2016. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.



How to Make Healthier Choices While Eating Out



Food choices away from home are important to your health and weight since many of us are eating more meals away from home. Fortunately, making healthful and delicious choices in restaurants is also easier today. Restaurants of all types are responding to customers' desires with more options in portion sizes, preparation methods and menu items. For example, restaurants are offering:

- More small plate or appetizer-size portions of popular entrées.
- More roasted and grilled choices in meat, fish and poultry.
- More variety in fruit and vegetable side orders.

Hit the Bricks

Make physical activity part of dining out. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes.

- **Walk from home or the office.** Pick a restaurant that's a 10- or 15-minute walk. You'll get your meal, 30 minutes of physical activity and avoid the parking hassles.
- **Walk with family or friends.** Get moving as a group before or after eating. A brisk walk before a meal gives you time to chat. A stroll afterward helps your digestion.
- **Walk inside instead of using the drive-thru.** Park your car in the lot and walk inside to get your fast food order. And, make fast food an occasional treat rather than a daily habit.

Right-Size Your Serving Sizes

Becoming sensible about serving sizes is an important way to maintain a healthy weight, and it's good for your wallet too.

- Start with a small serving such as a cup of broth-based soup or a side salad. If you are still hungry, order something else.
- Savor your steak twice as much. Eat half at the restaurant, then take the other half home to enjoy it sliced onto a green salad or as a sandwich on whole-grain bread.

- Ask for a to-go box as soon as your meal is served. Put half your food into the container for a second meal. That's two meals for the price of one.
- Share from start to finish. Order one appetizer for the whole table and then order one dessert with multiple forks. Sometimes, just a bite or two is perfect.
- Share an entrée. You can ask your server to split the meal in the kitchen or divide it up yourselves at the table.

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5 Tips to Kick Bad Eating Habits to the Curb



Are you guilty of skipping breakfast, ordering takeout, getting jittery from coffee overload and counting potato chips as part of a viable diet plan? It's time to kick those habits to the curb and start eating right. Here's a guide to help you get started.

Eat Breakfast

There's no better way to start your morning — and the year — than with a healthy breakfast. "It provides your body with the fuel it needs to make energy to keep you focused and active throughout the day," says Jessica Crandall, RDN, CDE, AFAA, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Spokesperson. Not only that, but if you are trying to lose weight, fueling your body regularly "will help you from possibly making unhealthy decisions later in the day based on hunger," adds Crandall.

The key to a good breakfast is balance. Include lean protein, whole grains and fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. For example, oatmeal cooked with low-fat milk and sliced almonds and berries or crust-less quiche with mixed veggies, low-fat cheese and a slice of whole-wheat toast.

Cut Back on Caffeine

Too much caffeine can interfere with sleep, can make you jittery and can cause you to lose energy later in the day, says Jim White, RDN, ACSM-HFS, Academy Spokesperson. Keep your caffeine intake in check by limiting regular coffee to 3 cups or less a day, and watch what you put into it. Skip unwanted calories and sugar by drinking it as plain as possible.

Need to wean off? White says to try three things: switch to half decaf or tea, drink plenty of water and eat small, frequent meals to keep up energy.

Bring Lunch to Work

How do you make bringing lunch to work easy? "Have your arsenal of food for the week. Have the right foods to put together," says White. "By stocking up the fridge, you're setting yourself up for success."

White suggests preparing the week's lunches over the weekend — bake chicken, chop veggies, steam rice. Make sure your options include a combination of lean protein and carbohydrates. For example, whole-grain bread with turkey, 1 cup of veggies and a piece of fruit. Or, try a salad with veggies and chicken, a piece of fruit and a 100-calorie cup of low-sodium soup. It doesn't have to be a full meal. "If you're crunched, get a snack," says White. Go for fat-free or low-fat yogurt and fruit, whole-wheat crackers and low-fat cheese or hummus and baby carrots.

Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and veggies add color, flavor and texture, plus vitamins, minerals and fibers to your plate. Crandall recommends picking one fruit or veggie you've never tried each time you go to the grocery store. "It's a great way to discover new options," she says.

Don't let winter stop you from enjoying produce either. It might be harder to find fresh options, but frozen and canned are great alternatives.

Cook Dinner at Home

Making meals at home doesn't have to zap the last bit of your time and energy. The trick is to plan ahead. "If the week is cramped for you, then prepping on the weekend is a great time saver," says Crandall. Choose options you can make in advance. For example, cook a batch of soup you can portion out for lunches or dinner during the week, or bake a whole chicken to slice for sandwiches, wraps and casseroles, suggests Crandall.

Use shortcuts such as pre-cut or frozen veggies and keep staples on hand such as low-sodium broth, herbs and lemons for flavoring. A quick and easy idea is to turn leftover beef into stew with beans, no-salt-added diced tomatoes and pre-cut veggies.

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Family Play Time



Try to involve the whole family in physical activity. Your child is more likely to be active if you are active.

Choose some of your family's favorite activities, and come up with a few new ones. Then decide how many times each week you can add them to your activity schedule. Work up to sixty minutes of physical activity per day, five to seven days a week.

Before you begin family activities or encourage your child to become more active, keep the following points in mind:

- **Overweight children may not feel comfortable in organized and competitive games.** Choose activities where winning or performing well doesn't matter (like biking or walking the dog).
- **More activity won't just happen. You need to help your child plan for it.** Plan a family walk right after dinner. Arrange a family activity on weekends.
- **Physical activity can be increased in small ways.** When you go to the store, park farther away and walk. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Or have your child push the shopping cart if he or she is able. Even daily chores can burn calories.
- **Choose fun activities.** When children have fun while exercising, they are more likely to continue enjoying it for the rest of their lives.
- **Let your child try lots of activities.** Offer choices like baseball, basketball, tennis, track and field, or soccer. Then let him choose what he likes to do best.

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