**What is “healthy eating”?**

Healthy eating is a way of balancing the food you eat to keep your body and mind strong, energized, and well nourished. Healthy eating is an important part of taking good care of yourself.

* Aim for regular meals (3 meals per day; one in the morning, afternoon, and evening) and 2-3 healthy snacks (when you are hungry).
* Eat a variety of foods from all of the food groups (grains, fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy, and healthy fats) each day to meet your nutritional needs
* Listen to your body. Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are feeling full and satisfied

**Healthy eating is a great way to:**

* Have energy all day long
* Get the vitamins and minerals your body needs
* Stay strong for sports or other physical activities
* Reach your maximum height (if you are still growing)
* Prevent unhealthy eating habits, like skipping meals and feeling overly hungry at the next meal

**Tips for Healthy Eating**

1. Don’t skip meals – plan meals and snacks ahead of time.

Believe it or not, eating 3 meals with 2-3 healthy snacks in between is the best way to maintain your energy and stay healthy. You are more likely to choose foods that are not as nutrient-rich when you skip meals and become overly hungry.

Eat breakfast! Skipping breakfast can lead to over-eating later in the day. Beginning your day with a balanced breakfast gives you the energy you need to start the day and focus at school or work.

Eating away from home? Don’t leave yourself stranded—pack foods with you or know where you can go to buy something healthy and satisfying.

1. Learn about simple, healthy ways to prepare foods.

Try different ways to cook foods such as grilling, stir-frying, microwaving, baking, and boiling instead of deep frying.

Try fresh or dried herbs (basil, oregano, parsley) and spices (lemon pepper, chili powder, garlic powder) to flavor your food. Other ways to add flavor include using lemon juice, lime juice, hot sauce, or olive oil to foods.

Trim the skin and fat off of your meat—you’ll still get plenty of flavors and it’s more nutritious.

1. Drink water

Getting enough water throughout the day is essential to your health.

Drinking water can help with regulating your body temperature, providing protection for your joints and tissues, and help with constipation.

Drinking water will also help regulate your energy levels. Other sweetened beverages such as soda can often give you quick energy but cause you to “crash” later on.

1. Try different fat sources in your diet

Traditionally, a lot of foods are made with solid fats such as butter, coconut oil, cream, hydrogenated oils, or partially hydrogenated oils (such as margarine). However, there are lots of different fat sources that you can try in your diet. For example, olive oil or canola oil are sources that remain liquid at room temperature and offer a different nutrient make up and flavor.

Try a “Meatless Monday” which is a fun way to incorporate different sources of proteins found in plants such as soy, beans and wheat gluten.

1. Be mindful when eating

Slow down when you eat. Try to relax and pace yourself so that your meals last at least 20 minutes, since it takes around 20 minutes for you to feel full.

Listen to your body. Eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are full will help your body balance its energy needs and stay comfortable. Ask yourself: Am I eating because I’m hungry? Or am I stressed, angry, sad, or bored?

Eating naturally fiber rich foods, such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits will help you feel comfortably full.

1. Avoid “diet thinking.”

There are no good foods or bad foods. All foods can be part of healthy eating, when eaten in moderation.

You do not need to buy low carb, gluten-free, fat-free, or diet foods. These foods are not necessarily lower in calories and are often lacking in essential nutrients —they usually have lots of other added ingredients to replace the carbohydrates or fat.

Your health and happiness can be hurt by drastic weight loss plans. If you have not yet reached your adult height, rapid weight loss could interfere with your growth. Instead of trying extreme approaches, focus on making small lifestyle changes that you can stick with for life. This approach will leave you feeling healthier and happier in the long run.