Live Well, Eat Well

Once you learn a few basic ideas, you'll find healthy eating isn't all that hard. This handout doesn't give you exact foods or amounts — it focuses on good habits you keep over a lifetime.

Why eat healthy?

- **It protects your health.** A steady diet of junk food — or even just an imbalanced daily diet — can clog your system and zap your energy. But regular, nutritious eating helps prevent and treat many different health problems, such as:
  - High blood pressure
  - Bone disease
  - Diabetes
  - Some cancers
  - Heart disease
  - Obesity

- **It helps you maintain your weight** — or lose weight, if you need to. Eating healthy can prevent you from slowly putting on pounds — and having to fight to lose them.

- **It makes you feel better.** If you make wise food choices throughout the day, you'll:
  - Sleep better
  - Improve your mood
  - Have more energy

What's in it for YOU? How could eating well make the biggest difference in *your* life?

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What does healthy eating look like?

With so many food fads in the news, knowing what to eat can seem confusing. But healthy eating can be as simple as 1-2-3:
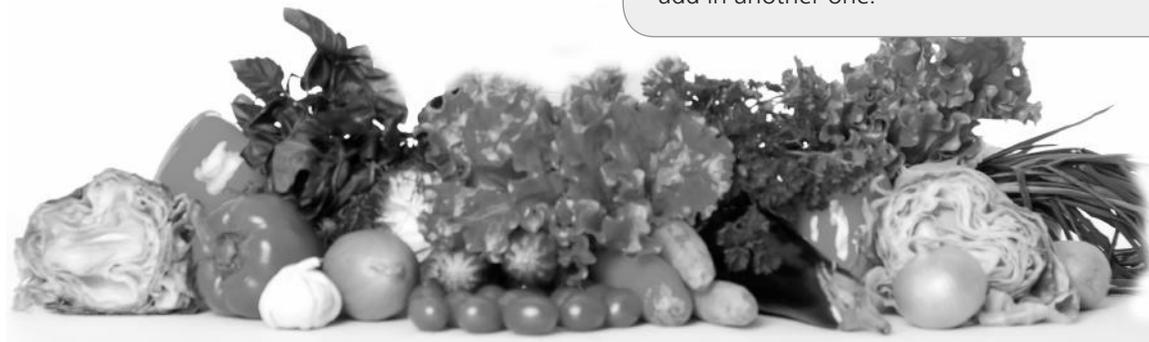
1. **Choose foods wisely.** Choose more foods with nutrients and fiber, and fewer foods with added fat, sugar, and salt. This means making smart choices as you buy, and prepare your food. *See page 2.*

2. **Enjoy what you eat — just eat less of it.** You can't manage your weight without giving some thought to the amount of food and calories you're eating. *See page 3.*

3. **Eat mindfully.** Eating mindfully means paying attention to what you eat, when you eat, and why you eat. It can also mean you enjoy your food more. *See page 3.*

It's all about habits

The key is to build daily habits you can stick with. You don't need to make a new plan over and over again. Make small changes you can gradually build into your life — and then stick with them for a lifetime.

This handout has lots of ideas for new habits. You don't need to do them all at once! **Mark a ☑ next to one or two healthy changes you're ready to make now.** When they become routine, you'll be ready to add in another one.

1. Choose foods wisely

There's no magic formula for eating well. If you make every bite a struggle between good and evil, you'll probably burn out from all the drama (and guilt). Think balance, think variety, and find ways to include occasional treats in your healthy diet. The trick is to focus on better habits such as eating more fruits and vegetables.

Eat MORE healthy foods

Healthy foods have more nutrients and fiber, and is better for you. They make you feel full longer so you'll be less likely to go looking for unhealthy snacks.

- [ ] **Save half your plate for fruits and vegetables.** Eating 5 to 10 servings (3 to 5 cups) every day is one of the best ways to eat well.
- [ ] **Eat whole grains.** Choose whole-grain breads, pastas, and rice. Add grains that are naturally high in fiber and nutrients such as quinoa, barley, bulgur, and wheat berry.
- [ ] **Eat lean protein and fish.** Choose lean meats and prepare them with little added fat. Try fish 2 or 3 times a week. Eggs are also a great choice.
- [ ] **Snack wisely.** Try eating a few unsalted nuts or seeds as a snack. Unsalted popcorn is also a good choice.
- [ ] **Choose low-fat dairy.** Switch to 1% or fat-free milk. Choose low-fat yogurt and cheese.
- [ ] **Drink plenty of water.** Have it whenever you're thirsty.

Eat FEWER less-healthy foods

Foods with a lot of added fat, sugar, and salt are less healthy for you. Because they have a lot of calories and not much nutrition, they're often called "empty calories."

- [ ] **Limit sweetened drinks.** Soda, sweet tea, punch, and sports and energy drinks have a lot of sugar. You can have these now and then, but not every day. Choose water whenever you can.
- [ ] **Cut back on foods with added fat, sugar, or salt.** Fast food, fried food, candy, chips, and many processed foods are less healthy and have extra calories. Choose fresh, whole foods instead.
- [ ] **Limit alcohol.** Have no more than one drink per day if you're a woman, or two drinks a day or fewer if you're a man. One drink means 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1½ ounces of liquor.

*"We used to be people who ate fast food a lot. We're not like that anymore. Now we eat **good** food."*

More habits to help you *choose wisely*

Any of the ideas on this page can be a new healthy habit. Check one you'd like to start with, or choose one of these:

- [ ] **Eat meals with your family.** When you eat at the table together, you're more likely to choose foods wisely. You're more likely to feel supported, too.
- [ ] **Plan your food ahead of time.** You'll make healthier choices when you're not hungry. Make sure healthy foods are ready to go when hunger hits.
- [ ] **Make less-healthy snacks harder to get to.** Keep them out of your house and off your desk.
- [ ] **Plan ahead how you'll politely say no** when someone offers you unhealthy food.

Make your own meal plan

Check out **choosemyplate.gov**. This site has tools and tips to help you create a personalized meal plan.

2. Enjoy what you eat — just eat less of it.

You've probably noticed that portion sizes in restaurants, stores, and homes have been getting bigger and bigger. When there's more food on your plate — let's face it — you'll eat more. It's no wonder our waistlines have grown! How much should you eat in one sitting, or in one day? For most of us the answer is *less that we're eating now.*

Be aware of how much you're eating now. Are your portions super-sized? Here's how to check:
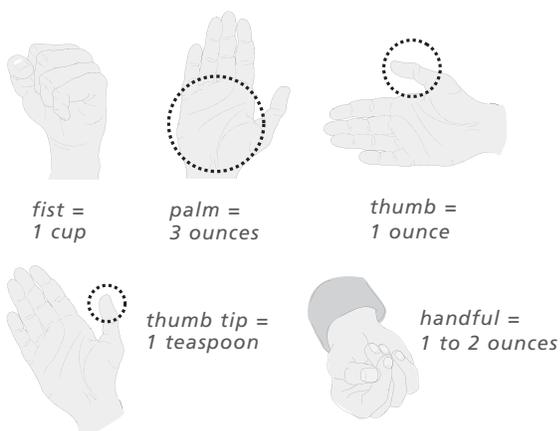
- ❑ **Keep track of what you eat.** You can use a notebook, a computer program, or mobile app. Record what you eat and how much you eat. Make sure to include all your meals and all your snacks — and be honest. You'll learn a lot about what you're really eating.

- ❑ **Read food labels.** Food labels help you know how much a standard portion is — and how many portions you're eating.

Learn what different portions look like.

- ❑ **Check yourself with a measuring cup or a scale.** Dish up your usual portion of food. Then pour it into a measuring cup or put it on a kitchen scale. For comparison, measure out one serving in the amount described on the food label. Is there a difference? Have you been eating supersized portions?

- ❑ **Learn to estimate by hand.** Use the pictures below to get a quick grip on your portion sizes. Bottom line: if it's bigger than your hand, it's more than you need.

*fist =
1 cup*   *palm =
3 ounces*   *thumb =
1 ounce*

*thumb tip =
1 teaspoon*   *handful =
1 to 2 ounces*

- ❑ **Limit your portion sizes.** Once you have a good sense of how much you're eating, you'll be better able to stay within limits.

- ❑ **Plan ahead how much food you should eat.** Measure the right-size portion onto your plate. Put the rest of the food away.

Sex	Age	Calories needed to maintain weight based on activity level		
		Low activity	Medium activity	High activity
Female	19 to 30	2,000	2,000 to 2,200	2,400
	31 to 50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51 and older	1,600	1,800	2,000 to 2,200
Male	19 to 30	2,400	2,600 to 2,800	3,000
	31 to 50	2,200	2,400 to 2,600	2,800 to 3,000
	51 and older	2,000	2,200 to 2,400	2,400 to 2,800

Learn your personal calorie limit. If you want to lose weight, you need to eat fewer calories.

More habits to help you *eat less*

Any of the ideas on this page can be a new healthy habit. Check one you'd like to start with, or choose one of these:

- ❑ **Eat a good breakfast every day.** Eating breakfast helps you snack less and have more energy all day. **What makes a good breakfast?** Protein and/or dairy, plus 1 to 2 servings each of whole grains, and fruits or vegetables.

- ❑ **Eat from a smaller plate or bowl.** You can have the satisfaction of finishing your plate, even though you've eaten less.

- ❑ **Don't eat out of the bag.** Don't leave containers of less-healthy food sitting out.

- ❑ **Allow second helpings only of fruits and vegetables.** Make this a rule for the whole family. Take all serving dishes except the ones with fruits and vegetables off the table while you eat.

- ❑ **Plan ahead how you'll politely say no** when someone wants you to eat more than you planned.

3. Eat mindfully

When you're sitting in front of the computer, watching TV, or driving, it's easy to eat a whole bag of chips without even realizing it. That's called eating mindlessly. Mindful eating means **making your meals a focused activity, not a mindless reflex.** When you eat mindfully, you'll naturally make better choices. Here are some ideas:

Pay attention to *why* you're eating

Sometimes we eat for reasons other than physical hunger. We may eat when we're stressed, tired, lonely, or bored.

- **Before you reach for a snack, ask yourself whether you're really hungry**. Are you eating for some reason other than physical hunger?

- **Keep a "food and feelings" journal** for a few days. You may start to see links between your emotions and your eating choices. When you eat, record:
  – The emotions you're feeling before you eat
  – How hungry you are before you eat
  – Your food choices
  – How full you are after you eat
  – The emotions you're feeling after you eat

Pay attention to *what* you're eating

- **Turn off the TV and computer while you eat.** Make the food be the main event.

- **Take your time.** Pause before you begin eating, take a deep breath, and notice your surroundings.

- **Sit at the table and eat slowly**. Set your fork down between bites. Don't eat while you're walking around.

- **Enjoy every bite.** Pay attention to the colors, textures, and smells.

- **Stop eating before you feel full.** It takes a while for the "I'm full" signal to reach your brain. If you keep eating until it does, you've already eaten too much.

"Eating a good meal together is our favorite part of the day."

More habits to help you *eat mindfully*

- **Enlist support.** Ask the people close to you to support you — or join you — as you start to eat well. Invite them to sit at the table with you and enjoy a healthy meal.

- **Be accountable to someone.** Report your progress to a friend, a registered dietitian, or a healthcare provider. Knowing that you'll have to report in will help you think more carefully about your choices.

- **Make a goal and a detailed action plan to keep it.** For tools to help, visit **Intermountainhealthcare.org/wellness**.

Want more support?

If you'd like more support as you're learning to eat well, it's there for you.

- Intermountain's *The Weigh to Health®* program offers a series of 12 sessions over a 6-month period. It's a proven method for helping change habits and lose weight. It may be covered by your insurance company.

- A registered dietitian can help you plan meals to address specific health needs.