



# 5 key habits of healthy eaters

**Most eating habits are established during childhood. But that doesn't mean it's too late to adopt new, healthy habits. Making healthy changes doesn't require you to completely overhaul your diet. Start at your own pace by practicing these key healthy-eating habits.**

**1. Eat Breakfast** - Research indicates that eating breakfast every day helps with weight loss and weight maintenance by reducing hunger later in the day. When you break the overnight fast with a healthy breakfast, it's easier to resist unhealthy choices during the day. Include at least two food groups such as whole grains, lean protein, dairy, or fruits and vegetables at breakfast to put you on track for a day of healthy eating.

**2. Drink water**- Water is a crucial nutrient that often gets overlooked. Sixty percent of your body weight is made up of water and every system in your body requires it to function properly. Fluid needs depend on several factors: your health, your environment, how active you are, and if you are pregnant or breast-feeding. The Institute of Medicine recommends that men need about 13 8-ounce cups of water a day and women need nine 8-ounce cups of water a day. Sometimes thirst can be misinterpreted as hunger. Check in with your body when you feel hungry, especially later in the day. Drinking a glass of water before eating can satisfy thirst and keep you from eating unnecessary calories.

**3. Know what's in your food**- Eat foods that contain only ingredients that you can easily identify and foods with just a few ingredients. Eating more "real food" will help you cut out processed food, such as chips, cookies and frozen meals. You will naturally choose fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein sources, and healthy fats. These foods are high in nutrients, but it's important to keep portion control in check when it comes to foods in the protein and fat groups, since they tend to be high in calories.

**4. Be politely picky at restaurants** - Most restaurants serve large portion sizes, loaded with salt and fat. To keep from overeating, request a to-go box right when your meal is served and save half for the next day. That way, you won't be tempted to eat more than you really want or need. Ask your server how foods are prepared and choose menu items that are baked, broiled, roasted, seared, poached or steamed. Also make sure to ask for sauces or dressings on the side, and look for vegetables or fruit as side options instead of French fries.

**5. Practice mindful eating** – Mindfulness is a form of meditation that involves focusing intently on the present — what you're feeling or sensing in each moment, even while eating. The practice of mindful eating allows you to slow down and savor your food, which can help prevent overeating. How? It takes up to 20 minutes for your brain to register the chemicals that let you know when you are no longer hungry. Slowing down helps your brain catch up to how full you're feeling. Take a moment before eating and think of the food you are about to eat as fuel for your body. Remind yourself that you would like to feel satisfied, not stuffed.

*Source:* <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/5-key-habits-of-healthy-eaters/art-20270182?pg=1>

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