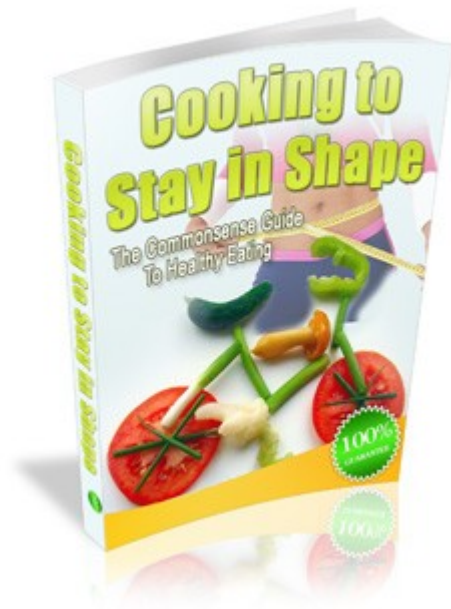


# Cooking To Stay in Shape



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## **Looking Forward to Dinner**

Many times dinner is the family meal that all gather and discuss what it is that has been going on throughout the day. So maybe that is not so much the case anymore, but many people still try to make it the main meal of the day. Dinner should at least be the most balanced of the three meals even if it is not necessarily the family meal that everyone had envisioned it to be.

Trying to find a meal that is well balanced and able to provide enough substance to allow you to sleep through the night and to not feel overly hungry when you are awake. Here is where you will find a meal that allows you to sample a wide variety of foods from various food groups. Here you will want to have a sampling of almost everything in order to be able to have a complete meal. The meal does not have to be overly large just have variety.

Remember as with anything moderation is key. Here just because it is the largest meal does not mean that you should gorge yourself at dinner. Smaller portions of a variety of foods is the most important thing that you should remember. Look at portion sizes and be sure to make all of your necessary groups are included in the meal to provide for a good night's sleep.

The three main groups that need to be included in the dinner meal are starch, protein and vegetable. In all these three items should take up the same amount of space on your plate. That means you should not eat a pound of steak and two baby carrots. It needs to be balanced and can even include a fruit or a small somewhat healthy dessert. However again the portions should not be large in size and should not dominate the meal. In essence a meal should contain approximately four ounces of each of the three main groups and then a small portion of either of the other items.

One last thing to be careful of with dinner is timing. Here one needs to consider how late they will be eating. If you are eating later than 8 pm, you may want to reconsider. It is usually after this time that the body tends to slow down and does not allow for the proper digestion and metabolism of these foods. So make sure to eat as properly balanced and timed meal.

## **Look Out For Turkey**

Protein is essential to anyone that is looking to lead a healthy lifestyle, but one source that many use too much of, is red meat. Granted many of the staples of dinner have come to fruition because of red meat, it should not always be the first option.

There are many other options to consider and to be creative with when it comes to making a healthy dinner. One of the most overlooked of course is turkey. Many people only consider this

as a holiday dish and do not even think about making it when they are going to prepare a family meal. However, it is available in many forms and can be used to make all different sorts of meals. One of the major forms available is ground turkey. In this form it can be used as a replacement for anything that one would use ground beef for. This would include as a meatloaf, burgers or meatballs. Here you can add seasoning, as well as other ingredients to not only enhance the flavor, but to make it a healthier option for your diet.

Another way to prepare turkey is in the form of skinless breast portions. This is because the skin of the turkey is the primary source of the fat that is on the bird. Use this part to make it into an entrée or to serve a smaller version of Thanksgiving dinner throughout the year. It can be a real change of pace and can lead to people wanting more without realizing that this actually a healthier option. This is of course as long as it is prepared properly. Baking is the best method for preparation. Additionally, use of the proper side dishes to complement the meal will also lead to a better option.

If you feel that the use of turkey predominantly will not work, you can use it to cut into the amount of red meat in a meal. Here if you are to mix it half and half with ground it may go unnoticed and you will be able to sneak a healthier option in without anyone knowing. Using the ground turkey to aid and cut into the amount of fat that is brought on by the eating of red meat will not only be a welcome addition to any family but from your body as well. You will feel the rewards quickly and will feel better mentally knowing you did something to help your health.

### **Better Cooking Through Poaching**

If frying is the way that you prepare most of your meals, you may want to switch to poaching. Poaching works in many ways and is an easy choose from most people since it requires just about the same amount of time. Plus, if you have recipes you think you are tired of, poaching them instead of cooking in the traditional method may give that recipe a new lease on life. Keep in mind, there are many ways to poach food. This is not a boring choice at all.

When poaching food, you are placing the food into a pan of simmering water and allowing the food to gently cook. This allows most of the nutrients to remain in the food but also allows flavor to get in. Best of all, water does not contain added calories or fat, like vegetable oil and cooking with butter does. You can enjoy a light textured food full of flavor without that heavy taste to it.

You can poach virtually any type of food that you would like. It is particularly good for eggs, fish and some types of pork and chicken. One of the best ways to get more flavor into your foods with poaching is to change out the liquid. Water works just fine and is often the simplest of

ways to prepare your meals. However, for a simple switch of the liquid, you can get much more flavor virtually instantly. For example, instead of simmering in water, poach the food with any type of vinegar you like (just add a small amount to the cooking water). You can also change out the water all together and add broth to the mix. Choose a low sodium variety so that you can control the salt. You can use juices, too.

You can also add just about any of your favorite spices and herbs to your poaching liquid. They will easily allow the flavor to get into the food. This is one of the best ways to add a lot of flavor without adding a lot of additional calories. Remember that with poaching, the food will retain its shape. It is also likely to hold just about all of its nutrients. That means that you do not need to add a breading to it or deep fry it in oil to enjoy this meal. Try out a few recipes for poaching and see just how easy it can be to add a completely new layer of cooking to your meals.

### **Be Careful With Red Meat**

As many of us know, we love red meat. In any form we can get it, it is a great way to have a great dinner. Steaks, burgers, roasts, as an add in, we love red meat. However, what we like the most, is not always what is the best option for us.

If you are going to be having red meat as the main course in your meal, you should consider what the options are and what the healthiest way to prepare it is. The first thing to look at is the fat percentage of the meat. Obviously, the leaner the meat is, the better the meat is for you. But you will also want to see how fresh the meat is as well. Look at the dates and when it was packed so as to get the best quality. When looking at roast and larger cuts, look at how much fat is on the meat and the color of the meat. The redder it is, the better it is.

When going to prepare red meat it is OK to marinade or rub it to enhance the flavor, but make sure that doing this will not make the meal unhealthy or will kill the point of trying to live a healthier lifestyle. Use methods to prepare the meal that will reduce the amount of fat that is on the meat and that you will consume. One of the best ways to do this is through grilling. Roasting is another option as long as it is done on a pan that has a false bottom to allow the fat to drain off. Broiling your meat to give it a seared and crispy taste is yet another way to enjoy your red meat.

One way you will want to eat your red meat more than anything else is well done. This is because when meat is prepared in this manner, it reduces the amount of fat that is in it dramatically. Granted this may not taste as good, and many will not want to have their meat in this manner, but sometimes you need to consider long-term ramifications here. Think of having a steak that is rare as a special treat. This way you will look forward to it more, and you will not

feel the need to have it as often and in essence be harming and killing yourself slowly by ingesting the fats from the meat.

### **Breakfast: Start the Day Off Right**

How many times have you said to yourself, that you just do not have the time to have breakfast of any sort. Alternatively, if you do have breakfast it arrived in your car window and someone smiled and told you to have a nice day. Both of these scenarios are unacceptable methods for replacing the most important meal of the day.

Your mother was not wrong. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Without it, your body will take longer to get to its optimal level as will your mind. Not only does it get you off to a bad start, but it hurts you in the long run as well as completely disrupting the digestive cycle.

In many cases when you wake in the morning, you feel hunger and suppress it so you can get to work earlier, or so you can get that five minutes of sleep you so desperately wanted. While you may think that this OK, it is actually slowing down your entire metabolism and thus causing your body to burn foods and fats at a slower rate, because it feels as if it will not receive the nourishment it will need.

This is not corrected by having a good lunch, this is because the cycle was started when you chose to not eat breakfast. Something to get the body started is better than nothing this is true, however, something healthy is going to trump everything else you may be looking to eat.

Consider the options of just having two pieces of whole wheat toast, making a small bowl of cereal with skim milk, or even having a cereal bar. All of these are better options, than a drive thru breakfast or no breakfast at all. Use common sense when you do this however. Another idea is to boil a couple of eggs the night before, this will give you protein to get your energy up and to start the day right.

Make sure that when you do eat something healthy for breakfast and have finally gotten the day going, that you do not ruin it by not eating for the rest of the day, or by eating a whole lot of things that you should not while you are going on the course of the day. Consider your options once you start to eat breakfast and begin to notice the difference that you feel in your body as well as your mind when you make this routine as opposed to the exception to the rule.

## **Consider Protein For Building Muscle**

Protein can be obtained in the diet in a multitude of different forms. Of course the primary is through the consumption of meat and fish. But it is also available in other forms as well. The consumption of eggs and now even in the form of bars and milkshakes are also ways to build up the amount of protein that you take in.

## **Balance It Out**

Do not take in a large amount of protein all at one sitting. You are going to want to spread out the consumption of the protein throughout the course of the day. With the largest amount of protein, that is taken in occurring during the workout portion of your day. This is because the protein that you ingest, no matter what form it is in, will aid in the building of muscle mass. Of course you will need to have a well balanced diet that contains a larger amount of protein, but it will need to be protein of the leaner variety. Consuming a large amount of red meat is not going to be very helpful as it will also contain a large amount of fat.

Try to eat a lot of leaner protein products. Eating items such as fish and skinless chicken breasts tend to be better options when it comes to finding good sources of protein. Also look into changing habits and getting protein enhanced granola bars to eat for breakfast. These will give a boost of energy as well as enhance the workout that you are working on.

## **Develop a Plan**

So you have determined to eat more protein and have settled on what the sources of the protein will be. Hopefully, this is not bacon and sausage. Now you will need to build a workout plan around the protein diet that you are using. You will want to incorporate both cardiovascular as well as weight training into the workout. By doing this you will be able to increase stamina and heart function as well as to build muscle mass.

Every day you will want to do at least 20 minutes of cardiovascular exercise. Then you will want to develop a weight training plan for 2-3 days a week in which you will work out a different section of your body on alternate workouts. So you will set up an upper body workout for the first session, and a lower for the second session. If doing three, create a workout for the entire body for the last workout and then follow this schedule and diet without fail.

## **A Slow Cooker Is Easy Healthy Food**

A slow cooker is a cooking device that cooks food at a very low heat, for a longer period of time. You may be wondering how this is going to help you to save time and to stay healthy. Slow



cookers are phenomenal for many reasons. First, the slow cooking process allows food to cook to the best possible texture without having to have a lot of fats or adding ingredients to it. More so, a slow cooker can be prepared during the morning, put on to cook before work and then you can come home to a rich meal hours later. It is easy to use.

How can a slow cooker help you with improving your health diet? There are actually many ways that you can do this. Here are some tips.

1. When cooking in a slow cooker, you do not need to add much fat for the cooking process. Rather, add broth or water to the food instead. You really do not need a lot of liquid to prepare the foods and it will not stick or burn so long as you give it enough to absorb.
2. You can place even very hearty vegetables into the slow cooker and they will come out soft and tender. This is one of the best benefits to using it. For example, if you wish to have a nice hearty dinner at six, you can start cooking at noon or before. Add some sweet potatoes or red potatoes to the cooker, through in lean cut of meat, add some other vegetables you have in the refrigerator along with a few cups of vegetable broth and you will have a very hearty meal in a few hours time.
3. A slow cooker can help you to improve recipes. For example, you can cook a turkey-based chili without adding a lot of fatty meat in it. You can take those left over tomatoes from your garden, skin them and then cook them down in the slow cooker with some added water to prepare homemade tomato sauce.

A slow cooker is not expensive. It is not hard to use. You just need to pull out the ingredients, cut them up, add them to the cooker and set the timer. Then, in a few hours, you have an all healthy meal without any frying on the table that the whole family will love.

### **Cooking With Whole Wheat**

One thing that many people do not think about when they are cooking bread or pasta is the option of using whole wheat products as opposed to the traditional white flour products. There is minimal to no difference in the taste, as well as texture and the health benefits are tremendous.

### **Consider The Carbs**

One of the biggest differences in cooking with whole wheat is the amount of carbohydrates that one will intake. Carbohydrates are a good thing, if they are eaten at the right time. However, if they are eaten as a late dinner or in large quantities in the evening they will no longer be the great source of energy that they could have been. This is because they are not

going to be used properly in the later stages of the day and your body will convert them to sugars and fats for use at a later time. This will make them harder to burn off and use.

By converting to pastas and breads that are whole wheat you will be able to not only improve your digestion of the food, but will eliminate quite a few of the carbohydrates as well. Remember that it is not good to eat these in the later stages of the day.

Not all breads and pastas need to be of this type, but it will be a great help. Another suggestion is to go to full grain and brown rice as opposed to the traditional white rice. Thus too will be a way to get rid of a lot of carbs in the diet and to be healthier all around.

The darker the food and grains in many cases, the healthier it is for you, as is with breads, pastas and rice. Also, consider how much of these items you will be consuming as well. Portion sizes play a huge factor. Look at what a serving size is, and follow it. The reason it says that is because, that should be all that you need in order to maintain a healthy and productive life.

Be sure to follow cooking instructions as well as recommended times when to consume these foods. As is usually the case, the later you eat, the harder it will be to burn the ingested calories. Human bodies become less active as the sun goes down and our activity decreases. This turns our bodies into storage containers for fat instead of calorie burning machines.

### **Cook With Trans Fat Free Oil**

According to many of us, there is nothing better than a good fried food. However, think for a moment that all of the oil that the item is cooked in is now being placed directly into your blood stream and going to clog up your arteries. Not so appealing anymore now is it.

However, it may not be this drastic; this is exactly what is happening at a much slower rate. However, this can be slowed even more if you are eating products that are fried or you are doing the frying on your own. The best way to do this is through the use of oil that is trans fat free. This is because the trans fats that are in some oils are the ones that lead to the bad cholesterol in your system. There are two different types of cholesterol that your body contains. One of course is good for you and helps your body to function at a normal rate. The other type of oil that one can intake is what your doctor will tell you is bad cholesterol, which primarily comes from trans fat.

The primary source of trans fat is animal fat. This is why it is now recommended that when cooking the oil that is used should come from sources other than animals. This would mean the use of vegetable, corn and canola oil. However, not using things such as lard and animal fat to cook in is no longer considered to be a good idea.

When shopping for items to fry with, look for the labels that say trans fat free. This will not only allow you to eat a few more of the fried foods that you so desire, than to have to worry constantly if you are clogging up something. Choose the healthier option if you are going to enjoy a fried product and use it to your advantage so you can lead a healthier life without all of the guilt.

Use only what will help you to live healthy and to enjoy life. Switching to trans fat free oil does not mean a longer life, and is not a green light to go and gorge yourself on fried foods. Even if it is trans fat free, there are still other fats and those can lead to bigger waistlines. As with all eating, moderation is the key.

### **Create A Food Diary To Track Your Health**

A food diary is exactly as it sounds, and since it is a diary, there is no reason to lie to it. You in essence will be the only one to see it, therefore you need to actually use it to track what you eat. This is a great tool that you can use to see where it is you are messing up on your way to creating a healthy life for yourself.

#### **What Should I Put In**

This is a real simple question and the answer is everything. If you had a scoop of peanut butter, write it down, snuck a small piece of chocolate, then put it in the journal. This is something you will need to use, it is something that will allow you to be able to track all food consumption.

You will need to enter not only the food, but you should enter calories as well as fat that intake in a meal or a snack, or secret snack. The time that the food was eaten as well as actual amounts. When recording the calories and such, it needs to be relative to the actual portion, not the recommended portion. See how much you should have eaten and then realize where you can cut to make a better life for yourself. Make sure to enter in what you cooked the food in as well. Depending on if something is fried or if you added butter will alter your intake of fat and calories.

#### **Where To Get One**

A good food diary is available in a health food store or else one can download it online and then print it up. There is also the option to enter your food online and allow it to calculate what you are taking in and then let the computer how good or bad of a day you are having. Just make sure again that you enter everything because if this is not done, then it is a useless tool that will not serve a single purpose for the user other than build false self confidence.

Another option if you want to make your own food diary, you can do this as well. Simply purchase a notebook, divide the pages into columns, tally, and then calculate all of the food that you eat for a week to a month. Enter all of the important information such as time and portions as well here. This will allow you to see if you are truly overeating, or if you are simply eating at the wrong time.

Using this journal will help you to not only see where you could eat better but how to better prepare all of the meals you eat.

### **Fresher Is Better When It comes To Veggies**

As always, you can never get enough vegetables into your diet. This is true in no matter what form they are in; they have more nutritional value than any other food you could possible consume.

However, the best option when it comes to having vegetables for your meal, either as an entrée or if they are to used a side dish fresh is the best option. This is because this is when the vegetables are at their peak of nutritional value. When shopping for vegetables go to the fresh produce section of the store and search for the best options that are available. Be willing to spend a little extra money on the product. Not only are fresh vegetables better in nutrition, but they have better flavor as well. They also are not full of preservatives either. The one drawback to having fresh vegetables is the amount of time that will be needed to prepare them properly. This is because fresh vegetables take longer to prepare than frozen or canned vegetables.

If you are unable to get fresh vegetables, the next best option is to purchase frozen vegetables to use with your meal. These are not necessarily going to taste as good, and they will not have the same nutrients as fresh vegetables however they will not be filled with preservatives as well. These will also be easier to prepare than fresh vegetables as most of the items that are frozen are at least partially cooked when they are frozen. In many cases, these are prepared through either boiling or in the microwave.

The last option to consider when it comes to using vegetables in your meals is canned. If you must used canned vegetables look for options that have no salt added. This is because if you use this type of canned vegetable, you will be getting rid of the worst of the preservatives that are in canned vegetables. This is because if your ingest too much sodium into your body, it can make you retain water and it can make your heart have to work that much harder to pump blood through you. Not only is the salt bad, but the other preservatives as well do not help you to lead the healthy lifestyle you are looking for.

Remember that the fresher the vegetable you want the better it is for you and your life.

### **Garlic For Heart Health**

One thing that people who are looking to eat healthy are going to want to consider is the addition of garlic in the diet. Garlic not only has multiple health benefits, but can add a great amount of flavor to any dish as well.

Garlic is one of the most universal additives that one can use to help with almost any type of dish. It can be an additive for breakfast to add flavor to eggs. You can use it in a salad as well as in a dressing or in a topping. It can be used to help with both entrees and side dishes as well to make some taste better or to add a bland dish or to give a roast a bolder flavor.

Garlic is also a wonderful additive to any meal as it is also good for the heart. It helps to promote heart function as well as to make the body work better. The garlic works to protect the heart from cardiovascular disease by releasing a component called allicin. This is the thing that makes breath smell in garlic, but also helps to make the heart work better and keeps it functioning at a higher level. The garlic that one will consume should be in the form of whole clove garlic as much as possible. You should not necessarily be eating cloves, but using cloves and not powder and salt as much in your cooking. This is because the allicin is released when the clove is broken and thus it is not nearly as prevalent in the dried forms of the garlic.

Garlic is something that one can use for a multitude of different things in cooking, and can enhance many different foods and dishes. Even if it is not included in the recipe, it can be used in the food. Garlic is one of those universal items that does not need to be listed in order for it to be able to be used. Use it sparingly or profusely. However, make sure not to use it to the point where it becomes the overwhelming flavor of the dish and the actual food it is being added to no longer is the spotlight of the dish.

Protect your heart and make great food all at the same time with the simple additive for life and for flavor. Make it taste good and good for you.

### **Healthy Cooking: Make Vegetables The Entrée**

As you try to improve your cooking techniques to add healthier into them, you may want to push the meat aside. While people do need protein throughout the course of the day, they do not need to eat as much as most Americans consume. In fact, five to seven hours of protein, in

a meat form, is more than enough. So, if you were not eating meat, what could you consume? Why not make vegetables the entrée instead?

Many people may think that vegetables are just for animals to graze on or something to eat when you are losing weight. Vegetables, though, are what help to sustain a healthy lifestyle. They are packed with nutrients, loaded with minerals, antioxidants and vitamins. More so, they are low in calories and they often can be eaten endlessly without worry.

But, how can you make vegetables a full entrée? Here are some ideas:

- The easiest choice is to use a salad format. With a salad, try more than just iceberg lettuces. Choose darker greens and rich spinach instead. These contain more nutrients for you. Top with virtually any fruit or vegetable that you enjoy. To add some protein, add in nuts instead of meat.
- Take to the grill. With a plate full of great vegetables, head to the grill and just cook them enough to soften them. You will find that many vegetables can withstand this outstanding cooking method. TO keep them from sticking, use a small amount of oil on them. Choose a variety and you may want to add in some fruit for a desert course. This can be an easy way to bulk up on the vegetables and get the more meaty texture that you enjoy.
- Go for a vegetable burger. You can find these readily available on the market. They are made up of all sorts of great vegetables and are highly healthy for you. You can top them with all the fixing you would place on a standard burger, without the overall sauces. If you want something with a meatier texture, try portabella mushrooms, which are just as large and meaty as a burger.

These are some of the ways that you can turn vegetables into meals, but in truth, any vegetable can be a meal itself if you just prepare it the way you like it and eat it as your main dish.

## **I Am Thinking Lunch**

Lunch is the one meal that will be the downfall of many when they are looking to have a healthy lifestyle. This is because in so many cases we are in such a hurry to get lunch and to get back to work that usually two things occur. Either we skip lunch, or we get some delicious meal from a drive thru window.

Lunch is not the most important meal of the day, that title belongs to breakfast, but it can be the most missed meal of the day. This is not a good thing at all. Since it is the bridge meal and the one that will get you through the day, it is integral to eat something that is of substance and

will provide you with energy. Trying to find the right combination to make this enjoyable is the hardest part.

The best option to consider when looking to have an enjoyable lunch is to of course take it with you. The best options for many are a low sodium, low fat deli sandwich, a piece of fruit or yogurt, a granola bar and some type of juice or tea. Taking a salad or some small prepared meal is another option, but make sure it is a healthy item and not something that will only fill and will not simply just put food in your belly. Other variations on this list are acceptable, but something that will fill and help you to get to dinner is what is most important. Try to pack a salad and top it with a piece of chicken you grilled the night before. Use your time the night before to prepare a healthy lunch you can take with you.

If you must go and get a meal, look at the salad options for starter and try to stay away from fried foods as much as possible. Fried foods will sit in your stomach and will also contribute a lot of unnecessary fat into your diet. By adding this extra fat it will make your body have to work that much harder to be able to burn it off and to allow you to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Even if you can only snack do your best to maintain some type of lunch in order to keep your body working right. Do not try to starve yourself, but make it through the day on small meals so you are not creating more problems for your body and making it function improperly with the metabolic cycle. Try to maintain a regular schedule as much as possible so you do not have to keep resetting your internal clock.

### **Go For The Green**

Vegetables are the most important item to consider when you are looking to change your ways. If you are looking to develop healthier eating habits and to improve your lifestyle, look no further than toward the green part of the plate.

### **They Do Not Hurt**

In almost diet that you will look at and consider, the one thing that there is never a limit on is the number of vegetables to intake. Of course, that is also without any add-ons. Broccoli with cheese sauce is no longer a vegetable. By adding, an abundance of butter or cooking veggies with bacon, it defeats the purpose of enjoying the vegetable with your meal.

Look at the color of the vegetable. The deeper and more vibrant the color of the vegetable, the more nutrients the vegetable will contain. For example, romaine and radicchio are going to contain a lot more vital items in them than simple iceberg lettuce will. Also, if you are going to

be using a salad as your vegetable, covering it with cheese and ranch dressing is another way to eliminate all of the nutritional value you are looking to acquire with the salad.

### **Mix It Up**

Do not be afraid to try new items from the vegetable family as well. Throwing in a twist or adding them to a dish will be great to enhance and improve your health. Look at all the different items that are available at your grocery store as well.

The best options to look at for vegetables are going to be ones that are fresh and organic. This is one way to insure that there is not anything in them that should not be as well as to know that you are getting as much out of your veggies as well. If you are unable to get fresh vegetables, then the next safest bet is going to be to get frozen. These will not taste the same, but they will have fewer preservatives and add ins as opposed to the ones that you will get from a can. Canned vegetables are the one type of vegetable that you should consume the least.

Canned vegetables are the most convenient to eat of course, but they are the ones that offer the least amount of nutrition to you. This is because they need so many preservatives and so many different things to maintain color and freshness. If you must use canned try to get the ones that have no salt added.

### **It Is Not How Much You Eat, But How Often**

This is not necessarily always the truth. Because yes, if you eat a lot and you eat it often, then it is a problem. However, if you eat between four and five times a day and in moderate amounts, it will have better benefits, then to eat three times a day in larger quantities.

### **Spread It Out**

So in essence, you want to eat less more often. This is because you want your body to be able to metabolize, or break down the food that you have eaten. Choosing to eat a well balanced diet throughout your day should occur as follows:

Start with a light breakfast, something like a cereal bar or two eggs.

Have a midmorning snack, possibly yogurt or protein bar.

For lunch have a balanced meal, a tuna sandwich with a piece of fruit and juice.

A mid afternoon snack, usually containing some type of fruit.



Have a sensible dinner consisting of a protein of about 4 ounces, a full serving of vegetables and a full grain rice, pasta or bread.

### **Make A Menu**

Do everything that you can to make a menu and to stick to it. Try to incorporate variety and color into your meals. Make sure that the foods you will be eating are going to be foods that you like and fit into the diet plan that you have set for yourself.

Do all of your shopping in the fresh food section of the grocery store, here the food will not only be more appealing and you will probably find all you are looking for to get the plan working. You will probably think you are eating more, but in essence will be eating less. This is because you will be eating smaller amounts throughout the day as opposed to all at once.

Try to stick with the plan and find a few minutes to eat the small snacks on the menu so you will not be as likely to gorge yourself when you do get a chance to sit down and enjoy a meal. Also, consider packing extra snacks to keep in the car or in your desk to help keep you on track and heading in the right direction when it comes to staying on this eating plan.

So make a plan and a menu and stick to it for a longer and healthier life.

### **Portion Control**

It is not necessarily what you eat that will cause you so many health problems. It is actually how much of something you eat that will lead to the problems with the diet that one will face. Sure eating healthier foods will definitely be to your advantage, but if you gorge yourself on something that is healthy, it will not matter if you have consumed too much of any one thing.

### **Pay Attention**

Read the packaging on anything that you are going to eat and see what is the recommended amount that one should eat. Then that should be what it is that you consume. Simply eating until you are full is not the proper way to eat at any time. Yes, you should eat when you are hungry and you should eat between four and five times a day, but it should be a wide variety of items and it should not be a full meal at every sitting. The nutrition facts that are provided on the packaging are there because they are acting as a warning to tell you not to eat too much at one time. Also look into what you prepare the food with as well as what type of condiments you are using as well. Look for low sodium and low fat products such as broths and trans fat free oils in order to improve your health.

## **Learn Self Control**

There is no problem with the wanting to indulge oneself from time to time with a treat or to eat more than one should in a single sitting. However, one needs to realize that it is not appropriate to go and have a bowl of ice cream every night even if they only eat the recommended serving. Everything in moderation is what is always recommended. So mixing in a treat once in a while is alright as long as it is not a regular occurrence and it is not something that one will turn into a regular portion of their diet.

## **Add It Up**

Look at what it is that you have eaten for the day. Now look at all the labels of everything that you ate. Here you will add up all of the calories, fat and all other items that you are tracking on your intake. Realize that even if you were watching you will not believe how much you actually consumed before you add it all up. Do not forget the soda in the afternoon, or the handful of candy at your desk. Now realize, how moderation and actually paying attention will be a huge wakeup call and reality check when you see how much an actual portion is and what it contains as opposed to what you ate and how much you consumed.

## **Reading Labels For Your Health**

One of the biggest things to consider is the actual ingredients that a product contains when looking to cook healthier. Just because the name sounds like something you would enjoy and it appears to be a healthy option to eat, that may not necessarily be the case.

## **Check the Values**

As is required on all packaged foods, the nutritional information needs to be included on the packaging so you know what it is that you are eating and how good or bad it is for you. The most important items to pay attention to are the calories as well as the fat. Not only these items, but where they come from as well. It should list the fat as well as if it is from trans fat as well. This is the type of fat that leads to bad cholesterol, which will lead to blocked arteries. Also, the calories are something else to look at, track how many are being ingested as well as where they are from. There will be a total amount of calories listed as well as how many of the calories are fat based. Use this to aid in deciding if this is something that you should eat.

## **Portion Sizes**

Remember that the nutritional values listed on the package are based on a portion size, however you need to be realistic. If you are only eating the actual designated portion then

there will not be a problem. However, if you consume more than the suggested portion you will need to know how much more an account for the additional amounts of calories and fat so as to properly track for your own personal health. This will allow you to see where the extra weight is coming from possibly.

### **Preparation**

The labels on the packaging also do not take into account if something is added to the dish or if you altered the preparation method from what is recommended. This is something that will need to be included if you use whole milk instead of skim, or you add a slice of cheese to something. All of these things need to be considered and accounted for. In order to get on the right eating track, you need to realize everything that is going in to be able to know what the outcome will be. Calculate what is going to be going in before you realize it two pounds too late.

### **Say Hello To the Grill Again**

One of the best ways that you can prepare your meals to create a healthy lifestyle is on your grill. It does not matter if it is propane, wood or natural gas, this is one of the best ways to not only prepare a healthier food, but a better tasting one as well.

The wonder of the grill is just how many different dishes that one can prepare on it as well as the ability to make an entire meal while standing in the grass. Here at the grill one is able to make all sorts of protein dishes as well as starches and vegetables all in one simple cooking device.

Consider all of the meat options that are available from a grill surface other than the obvious hamburgers and hot dogs. The ability to grill any type of fish without the need to use a fat to keep it from sticking to the pan. Preparing almost any type of beef or pork portion on a grill as well as almost any other type of meat to not only give it a flavor of the grill, but if using wood, the flavor of the type of wood that is being used. Some grills even have the option for a rotisserie as well so as to be able to cook whole chickens or to possible make a roast of some type on one also.

Vegetables are another great item that one can prepare on a grill as well. Choose from corn, asparagus, mushrooms and peppers. Use of any of these or a combination of any to make a wonderful and flavorful side dish in order to make any meal better. Another option of course is to mix the protein together with the veggies on a kabob. This way you will almost ensure better portions as well as healthier options.

Do not forget to include the starch when you are using the grill to make your dinner. Of course the most popular item that someone would come to think of is the baked potato. The grill can also be used to make a variety of breads as well as just to heat up some rolls to enhance the meal. However try to come up with other better ideas to create on the surface so as to enhance not only your cooking, but your lifestyle as well.

### **Some Great Snack Ideas For A healthy Life**

While breakfast may be the most important meal, many people believe that they would not be able to live if they were unable to snack. There is nothing better than a healthy snack to get you through the hump of a long day, as long as it is something that will help you and not hurt you.

The hardest part is trying to determine which snacks will best fit into the lifestyle that you have and what will be the most conducive for you to choose so as to be able to make it through the day.

The most obvious snacks that one would consider would be fruits and raw vegetables just like the ones that mom used to pack in your lunch, however these are not always going to be able to be transported and at times it is not going to be readily enjoyable. You may not want to be the guy eating a banana in your office, or the person munching on carrots while working.

Another set of options would be the prepackaged snack. Some of the items to consider would be granola bars, nuts, protein bars, cereal bars and dry cereal. Here you can bring in more than enough for one day and leave it in your workspace as well as be able to have an emergency meal if you are in a pinch or simply cannot get to your lunch. Make sure to look at the nutrition information on the package as well. You may think you are doing something good and then realize, that the granola bar was no better than a bag of chips.

Consider the option of refrigerated healthy snacks that may be a good option to help you get through the day. Some of these might include yogurt , cheese cubes, cottage cheese or even a fruit cup. Consider mixing and matching the items so as to create variety.

Remember to pack a snack. If not you will feel the pangs of hunger well before your next meal and will not be able to metabolize your food properly or else overeat. The snack is a bridge you use to get from one main meal to the next. Without these we would have horrible eating habits and would consume too much in one meal and be in even worse shape than we already are. Use them to improve health and lifestyle.

## **Snacking Is OK, If It Is Done Right**

Snacks can be an important part of your daily way. It is even encouraged to be done to maintain a healthy lifestyle. That is of course as long as you are eating the right types of snacks. Sitting down and having a bag of chips while you are reading online does not fall under the category of a healthy snack.

### **Some Healthy Snacks**

There are many different routes to take when looking for ideas for a healthy snack. There is the ultra healthy alternative of fresh veggies and fruit. Of course you could always accompany the fruit with a cup of yogurt to dip it in. A low calorie dip or salad dressing could be used with the vegetables as a flavor enhancer as well.

Something a little more creative may be to have a small bag of dry cereal to munch on to help as a snack. You could do this all sorts of other things as well, such as almonds or walnuts. Try something different and that you will like to use as a small snack in between meals.

There are of course the old stand bys as well. Items such as granola bars and a cup of yogurt work very well as healthy snacks for between meal nourishment. Consider trying a cereal bar or a smoothie if you have the option to do so.

If you are planning to work out after work you may want to look at getting a protein enhanced snack to have. Something like a protein bar or a protein shake to have in the afternoon. This will help enhance your workout as well as boost your energy level to get you over the hump at work. In as far as being able to work out it will enable you to build more muscle mass and to have more stamina for your workout.

### **When To Eat Snacks**

Optimally you should eat two snacks a day. These would be used as bridges between the three main meals. This will encourage you to eat smaller meals and to be able to more thoroughly enjoy the day as you will stop looking to get to the next meal and will not be as hungry between meals as well. Here you will be able to balance out your fruits and vegetables and be able to get all of the necessary nourishment without having to overdo a certain meal.

### **The Benefits of Baking**

As many people are aware, fried foods tend to taste so much better than other types of cooking, however that does not mean that these foods are better for you. Baking foods will not

necessarily ruin or eliminate flavor as many believe, but it will increase the health value tremendously.

### **Turn Off The Fryer**

As opposed to making deep fried French fries, try baking them in the oven instead. You will eliminate a good amount of the fat that would be ingested if the potatoes are baked with a touch of olive oil as opposed to being placed in the fryer for a few minutes. In the fryer, not only are the fries coated in the fat as they cook, but the fries will absorb the fat as well. Consider doing the same thing with mozzarella sticks as well. If you are going to use a fryer, use canola or vegetable oil. Make sure that the oil that is used has no trans fats in it as well. These types of things will lead to less intake of the bad fats and a healthier lifestyle.

### **Savor the Flavor**

Baking something does not mean that all of the flavor will be lost. Try to use recipes and try new ideas that will enhance the flavor of something while it is baking as opposed to going in thinking that it will be bland any way. Try to use different spices and herbs to enhance the meal. Bake skinless chicken breasts with garlic and black pepper, to enhance and preserve the flavor. Use different ideas and some of the recipes you have seen but never took the time to try to be able to increase your flavors and pallet.

The biggest benefit to baking over frying is of course going to be the reduced amount of fat that you will intake. However, cooking in this way will also allow you to be able to try new combinations and flavors together as well. Making a baked dish that is full of flavor and healthy at the same time can be a goal as it is much easier to accomplish this without frying.

You can still eat fried foods, just in moderation. Use the fryer periodically and with the right types of oil in it. Use it to be able to treat yourself and to give you something to look forward as opposed to being a staple of the typical dinner.

### **The Endless Possibilities Of Chicken**

Chicken is one of those foods that can be used in almost any dish and will be acceptable as not only a substitute but as the main attraction. Using chicken in your meals, not only promotes a better eating lifestyle, but better overall health as well.

Let us start by not getting ahead of ourselves here. Fried chicken, no matter how it is made, is not going to be one of the healthy options when it comes to chicken choices. First, the skin of the chicken in almost all cases is going to need to go. No, matter how good one would like to

think that the chicken tastes with the skin on, it is the primary source of the fat that is on the chicken. So the first thing to do is to get the skin off. So now, we know, frying the chicken and eating the skin are the two things you will not want to do in most cases when preparing it for your meals.

One of the best ways to prepare your chicken is on the grill. Here there are a lot of different options when it comes to what it is will be the end product from your chicken cooking. If it is simply grilling boneless chicken breasts, to using small chicken portions and vegetables to make kabobs, you can get as creative as you want with this. However, it does not need to be bland. Consider using different spices, rubs and marinades to enhance the flavor of the chicken you will be making. Just be sure to look at what is in them and that you are not defeating the purpose of having the chicken in the first place.

Use your oven as a great way to make a great meal. Baking the chicken that you have prepared is always a good option when it comes to trying to determine the best way to enjoy it. Using a sauce or a doing a quick sear to lock in moisture and flavor are good things when going to make chicken in the oven. Be creative with spices as well as garnishes when going to make a meal that is centered around chicken. By baking it and not frying it or putting it in oil, you will not only save yourself, but enhance the flavor of the chicken as well. This is beneficial for your health and for your life.

### **Variety Is the Spice Of Life And The Life Of New Meals**

One of the biggest concerns that many will face when they are looking to have a healthy eating style is the fear of loss of food. Of course, if you are looking to eat better, then yes, you will in all likelihood need to give up some of your favorites or save them for a special occasion.

When one is looking to cook healthy there are plenty of things that one can add to a dish to enhance the flavor and to allow for the dish to taste even better. Use of herbs and garlic as opposed to putting in high amounts of salt will lead to not only better tasting, but better for you dishes as well.

Learn to use natural herbs in your cooking to bring out the best flavors and to allow for the maker to be able to get creative in their cooking. Use of different types of peppers and different herbs will only encourage and enhance flavors without covering them up.

Look into possibly starting a small herb garden of your own so as to be able to have the items you want readily available so you can keep the food coming and on a different level than what it is that you are used to. Use these items not only in preparation, but in the cooking and to

enhance flavor upon completion as well. Salt per se is not bad, but it needs to be used in moderation as opposed to the primary or only seasoning agent that takes residence in your kitchen.

Look in the corner of your kitchen or in that small cupboard. Here you will rediscover all of the spices that you forgot existed. Here you will be able to bring out the flavor of your healthy cooking and take it to a new level with little to no effort. See what it is that you have hidden and try it in different dishes to see how it tastes and what it else it could possibly work with.

Try to think of other recipes or other ways that you can make the bland simple foods you have taste better. It may be as simple as adding a sprig of parsley or grinding some fresh black pepper over the top. These simple steps will lead to many different and better things.

## **When To Eat**

A lot of people would like to be able to eat all of the time. Having the ability to eat any time any day is not a good thing. Having the ability to discipline yourself and eat at the right times of the day are what will allow you to be able to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to be able to live longer.

The most important meal of the day is of course breakfast. This is of course the first meal of the day. It is essential to have this meal as it will give a kick start to your metabolism. Once you wake up you should not eat immediately. Wait about twenty minutes after you wake up to get something to eat. It does not need to be a substantial meal, it just needs to be nourishment to get your body moving. When you wake up our body is still not functioning at peak capacity. By eating something it will make your body start to work at a more efficient level.

In the middle of your day is going to be the best time to have your lunch. It is not necessarily at noon, but at the midpoint of your day. Here it should be something of some substance. This is because you have been waiting to get through the first half of your day and your body will need a recharge to be able to make it through the second half of your day. Choosing foods that are not on the heavy side, and that will be able to keep your energy up and not make you sleepy are essential for the lunch meal.

The last major meal of the day is of course dinner. Here is when you will have a major meal to allow your body to have something to burn for an extended period of time. This is because in most cases you will not be eating again before you wake up in the morning. Trying to get through the night without being hungry is what the purpose of this meal is. This is because you should not eat after 8 pm so as to not add more food for your body to digest as you sleep.



The other times to eat are midway between all of the major meals. This is your snack time. Here you will have small healthy snacks to get you through to the next major meal. This should be something small and filling that will allow you to not feel hungry between meals.