

National Nutrition Month 2020

Eat Right, Bite by Bite

March is National Nutrition Month®, a good time to focus on the importance of making informed food choices, developing sound eating habits and incorporating physical activity in to your routine. This year's theme, Eat Right, Bite by Bite, is a reminder that good nutrition and healthy habits don't have to be restrictive or overwhelming. Small goals and changes can have a cumulative healthful effect, and every little bit (or bite!) is a step in the right direction.

Here are some simple steps to put your nutrition in the right direction.

First eat a variety of nutritious foods every day. The current Dietary Guideline for American's created by Health and Human services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture emphasizes the importance of a healthy eating pattern where a combination of all foods eaten over time are the focus and not individual nutrients in a single food item. So choosing the right mix of can help improve healthy and reduce chronic disease, which means selecting healthy choices from all food groups leading to a more balanced diet. MyPlate.com is a graphic depiction of the current nutritional guide and is a great reminder to find a healthy eating style and maintain it for a life time, meaning:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Try and select whole fresh fruits instead of canned or dried and vary the types of veggies.
- Make ½ your daily allowance of grains, whole grains and stay away from refined/ processed grains such as white rice, flour, and pastas. Bread.
- Eat seafood twice a week. Fish such as salmon, trout, herring and sardines contain a range of nutrients including omega-3 fatty acids which have been shown to reduce the risk of coronary artery disease, heart failure and cardiac arrest.

Hydrate the healthy way. Nutrition is not only just about what you eat, it's also what you drink and soda is not the only type of beverage to avoid if wanting to skip empty calories. Juices, protein shakes, energy drinks and sparkling waters are all loaded with added sugar and offer little or no nutritional benefits. To stay hydrated the healthy way, there's no doubt about that water is the best choice, but can also be boring. A simple way to liven up H₂O is to infuse it with fresh fruits and vegetables. In fact, it's a great way to also get kids to enjoy drinking water. Here are a few ideas:

- Cucumber, Lemon and mint
- Strawberry, raspberry and blackberry
- Strawberry, orange
- Cherry and lime
- Apple, drop of vanilla extract and a dash of cinnamon
- Orange, lemon and grapefruit

Practice Portion Control - which isn't always that easy these days. Practicing portion control is also part of good nutrition and with restaurants today increasing portion sizes, eating responsibly is difficult. Practice portion control. researchers measured typical servings from takeout restaurants, fast food chains, and family-style eateries and found that bagels were 195 percent larger than the standard set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), muffins were 333 percent bigger and cooked pasta exceeded the standard by 480 percent. Scariest of all were cookies, which were a whopping seven times the USDA recommended serving size

At home- Use smaller plate, refrain from having seconds, don't keep serving bowls on the table. Sharing your meal with someone or getting a box with your meal so you can box ½ of it up before starting to eat.

2. Learn how to estimate serving sizes. "'Ballpark' food portion sizes by estimating serving sizes in comparison to known objects," says Rose Clifford, RD, clinical dietitian in the department of pharmacy

services at the Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC. “For example, three ounces of cooked meat, fish, or poultry is about the size of a deck of cards.” Other easy measurements to eyeball include:

½ cup is the size of an ice cream scoop

1 cup is the size of a tennis ball

1 ounce of cheese is the size of a domino

Listen to your hunger cues. Eat when hungry and stop when satisfied or comfortably full. “Try to gauge when you are 80 percent full and stop there,” says Clifford. “There will be more food at the next meal or snack!”

Simply stated, good nutrition can be attained slowly and shouldn't dramatically change one's life instantly. It's a journey shaped by many factors including culture, traditions, stage of life and preferences. A healthy diet can be attained with additional education and should encompass personal decisions made over time.