

9 Tips to Help Build Healthy Eating Habits



Most foods can give your body the energy it needs to work. And some foods are better choices than others because they provide healthy energy (nutrients). Eating well with health problems, like diabetes, heart disease or kidney disease, doesn't mean giving up your favorite foods. It's about finding the balance between keeping the flavors you love and including the nutrients you need.

Here are the top 9 tips to help you build healthy eating habits:



1. Plan what you will eat.

Informed food choices will help you meet your health goals — and they'll taste great, too!

Do not skip meals. Missing a meal causes your blood glucose to drop. It can also make you eat too much at your next meal.**



2. Pay attention to portions.

A good rule* is to fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter with lean protein, and one-quarter with quality carbs.



4. Enjoy each bite you take.

It takes 20 minutes for the brain to tell your body that you are full. Eat slowly. Take smaller bites. And chew your food well to help you control the amount you eat.



3. Eat regular meals that give your body the nutrients it needs throughout the day.

This will help keep your blood glucose (blood sugar) and energy at the right levels.

Avoid mindless eating. If you are craving sweet or salty snacks, pause to think about why. Eat when you are hungry. But do not eat out of stress or boredom.



5. **Read food labels.** Choose foods with a lot of the nutrients you need, like protein and fiber. It's a good idea to limit processed and packaged foods when possible.

When reading food labels, try to avoid foods that are high in:

- Calories
- Carbohydrates
- Fat
- Sodium

Added sugars and unhealthy fats are often found in:

- Crackers
- Creamers
- Desserts
- Frozen dinners
- Sodas
- Spreads



6. **Drink plenty of water** unless your health care provider tells you otherwise. Water is good for your body. Sometimes you feel hungry when your body needs water.

- Drink a glass of water before you eat a snack.
- Try to limit soda and other high-calorie drinks. They often have a lot of sugar and empty calories. Water, unsweetened drinks, or diet soda are a better choice.



7. **Choose healthy treats.**

- Keep healthy snacks at home, like:
 - Berries with cheese or nuts
 - Hummus or guacamole with carrots
 - Nut butter with apple slices or celery
- Avoid meal plans that are too strict. You may struggle to follow these plans.
- Eat a small treat now and then. This can help you stick to healthy eating habits.



8. **Lean on your health care team for support.** Social media may be fun, but it can be hard to recognize bad advice. Quick weight loss tricks or fad diets do not usually lead to lasting weight loss or health.



9. **Find the balance.** Add a couple of these steps to your daily routine. Do more when you feel like you are ready. Make changes as needed to stick to your plan. It takes time to build healthy eating habits. Be patient with yourself and proud of each step you take.

Talk to your health care provider or a registered dietitian to create an eating plan that works for you and your body. For diabetes- and kidney-friendly recipes, and more tips on healthy eating habits, visit [DaVita.com/Cookbooks](https://www.davita.com/cookbooks).

* "The Diabetes Plate Method" <https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/articles/what-is-the-diabetes-plate-method.html>

** Ahola AJ, Mutter S, Forsblom C, Harjutsalo V, Groop PH. Meal timing, meal frequency, and breakfast skipping in adult individuals with type 1 diabetes - associations with glycaemic control. Sci Rep. 2019 Dec 27;9(1):20063. doi: 10.1038/s41598-019-56541-5. PMID: 31882789; PMCID: PMC6934661.



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