

10 ways to make it a habit to eat less, eat better and exercise more

The holidays are over, and many people have resolved to lose weight. But it's often a struggle to figure out the best way to drop pounds. So USA TODAY's Nanci Hellmich asked four registered dietitians for their tips for eating healthier and exercising more in the new year. The nutritionists who contributed advice include Keith Ayoob of New York City; David Grotto of Chicago; Edith Howard Hogan of Washington, D.C.; and Robyn Flipse of Ocean, N.J.

10 ways to increase physical activity when time is a problem.

1. Practice random acts of exercise. Keep an extra pair of tennis shoes in the car and walk around the school, field or recreation center while waiting to pick up the kids. Or do laps around the mall before shopping.
2. Trade your exercise spaces. Put your stationary bike, treadmill or other exercise equipment in the kitchen, home office or another room where you spend a lot of time. Exercise when you talk on the phone, watch the news or wait for dinner to cook.
3. Think of the TV as an activity box. When it's on, do something — stretching exercises, weight training, sit-ups, marching in place, jump rope. Keep a hula-hoop on hand and give it a whirl during commercials.
4. Aim for 150 or more. Here's how long it takes to burn 150 calories (varies slightly based on height and weight) — running, jumping rope or shoveling snow for 20 minutes; walking 2 miles or raking leaves for 35 minutes; washing windows or washing the car for 60 minutes.
5. Work in some walking. Walk half of your lunch hour. Climb up the stairs at home or work. Pace while you're on the phone.
6. Keep an exercise log. On a sheet of paper, make a grid with the date on the left side and 10-minute time slots across the top. After you complete a bout of exercise, put an X in the box that corresponds to the amount of time you exercised. The government suggests aiming for at least 30 minutes of activity a day, but some research suggests it may take an hour or so to keep weight in check.
7. Count every step. Buy a pedometer and try to work up to 10,000 steps a day (about 5 miles). For information on how increase walking, go to www.americaonthemove.org
8. Coach yourself fit. Try coaching your child's soccer team, basketball team or another active sport. Work out with the players.

9. Play at it. Join your kids in a game of touch football or tag. Go for a family walk after dinner or bike around the neighborhood.

10. Walk for convenience. Skip valet parking and stop using the drive-up windows at the bank and pharmacy. Get out of the car and do the errands.

10 ways to cut calories without feeling deprived

1. Trade plates. Use a salad plate instead of a dinner plate. It'll help you eat smaller portions.

2. Go from light to heavy. Start your meal with a big salad with lots of vegetables and a low-fat or regular dressing on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing, then in the salad, to cut calories. Research shows that if you fill up on low-calorie foods first, you'll eat less of a calorie-laden entree.

3. Think of some 300-calorie meals. Some examples: a BLT without mayo; one-half bagel with 1 ounce of cream cheese and a half-cup orange juice; two poached eggs on an English muffin; a Wendy's grilled chicken sandwich.

4. Use the "b" words. When cooking meats, use methods that start with "b" — broil, barbecue, braise or bake (on a rack so the fat drips away).

5. Use cooking spray or carefully measure oil. A little adds up. A tablespoon of oil is 120 calories; a tablespoon of butter, 100 calories.

6. Don't munch, eat lunch. Some people start nibbling at 11 a.m. and keep at it until 1 p.m. Better to sit down and face your food.

7. Curb the urge to splurge. Satisfy your sweet tooth with a bite-sized piece of candy, a chocolate kiss or hard candy. If you freeze the chocolate first, it'll melt in your mouth more slowly.

8. Try a different brew. Switch from high-calorie specialty coffees (a 16-ounce Mocha Frappuccino at Starbucks has 420 calories) to a latte made with skim milk. Add a bit of hazelnut or almond flavoring for extra flavor.

9. Plan for snacking. Some 100-calorie snack ideas: 1½ cups frozen grapes; 2 plums; one-half cup of sherbet; 1 ounce of cheese; a single serving box of cereal; one-half cup berries and fat-free cookie; 3 cups of air-popped popcorn.

10. Move foods out of sight. Keep high-calorie snacks like cookies and chips tucked away in an inconvenient place at home and at work, but keep your favorite fruits washed and ready to eat.

10 ways to eat healthier when dining out

1. Downsize your sandwich. When you order a sandwich, no matter what the filling, ask for half the amount they usually serve.
2. See red. Tomato-based sauces in Italian restaurants have less fat and fewer calories than the white or pink sauces.
3. Pass on the breadbasket. Ask your server not to bring the bread or to bring it one slice at a time. Eat bread only with your meal or only if it's warm. Delay eating it as long as you can.
4. Soup up your menu. Start with a broth-based soup and then split the entree before you dive in. You'll cut your calories and feel fuller sooner.
5. Watch for the clues. When eating out, look for words that speak volumes (of calories, that is): Batter-dipped, breaded, buttery, creamy, crispy-crunchy, deep-fried, pan-fried, rich. And for portion size, watch out for: combo, feast, grande, jumbo, king-size, supreme.
6. Order veggies. Scan the menu for interesting vegetables, such as arugula in a salad or asparagus, which you could order steamed or sautéed as a side dish.
7. Get a wrap. Wrap up half the meal at the beginning and take it home for another day.
8. Have a split for dessert. No, not a banana split, but share your dessert with someone. Or order a cappuccino with full-fat milk and add sugar. It's only about 100 calories.
9. Order a kid-size portion, not supersize one. The supersize is usually way too many calories.
10. Choose an appetizer for your main dish. They are sometimes smaller and have fewer calories than entrees.

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