

# Health Fact Sheet

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## Make Healthy Eating a Habit



The perennial best-selling book by Stephen Covey is titled "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" – NOT "The Seven OCCASIONAL BEHAVIORS of Highly Effective People." Habit has been defined as "something which you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it."

The philosopher Aristotle (384-22 BC) said "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Congressman and Olympic medalist Jim Ryun puts it this way: "Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."

"By determining when, where and how a behavior will occur, we no longer have to think much about getting it done,"

according to best-selling authors Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in "The Power of Full Engagement." Loehr and Schwartz give several examples where people who made a specific plan followed through, unlike those who failed to plan.

Many of us know what foods we **SHOULD** eat, but haven't formed a habit of eating them. Here are seven possible healthy eating habits and some tips to help you develop them.

### 1. Divide & Conquer

Whenever possible, make it a practice to divide a large portion at a restaurant in half **BEFORE** you start eating. You'll halve **BOTH** the calories and the cost of your meal!

Think "planned-overs" rather than "left-overs." Some people even make it a practice to ask for a "doggie bag" at the beginning rather than end of the meal. They remove half their food immediately so it's out-of-sight and remains out of their mouth!

**NOTE:** To handle take-home food safely, **TWO** hours from time of serving is the maximum time perishable foods should be at room temperature; **ONE** hour if it's 90 degrees or above. For best quality and safety, eat take-home foods in a day or two or freeze them for longer storage.

**ACTION PLAN:** Try this the next time you're served a large portion when eating out.

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Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.  
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

## 2. Keep Track to Stay on Track

A bite here, a taste there and the calories mount. To stay on track, keep track of those tiny tastes. A simple way to do this is with a golf stroke counter. You can purchase one in sports stores and golf shops for under \$5.

Attach it to your belt or put it in your pocket and keep count of each time you eat something between your planned meals and snacks. Continue to keep count daily until you've formed new habits and brought your "score" to a level you consider "par."

**ACTION PLAN:** If you like this idea, record in your calendar/planner right now when you'll purchase a counter.

## 3. Think 7's When Grocery Shopping

If you run short on food by the end of the week and making a complete grocery list just isn't for you, think in 7's. For example, if you need meats for 7 meals, write "7 meats." If you need 3 fruits a day for snacks and meals, write "21 fruits." Then pick up what appeals to you when at the store.

**ACTION PLAN:** Put a big "7" where you'll see it before your next trip to the grocery store. For example, place a reminder on your refrigerator door.

## 4. Develop a "Can-Do" Cupboard Plan

There's a limit to how long you can keep fresh foods and to how much space you have for frozen foods. Assure you always have nutritious foods on hand by starting the habit of keeping your cupboard stocked with some canned foods.

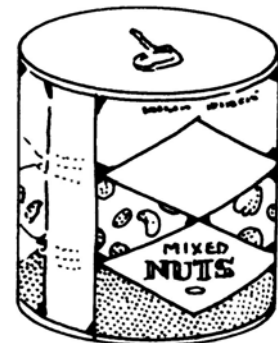
Canned foods can be as healthy for you as other forms of foods. According to the American Dietetic Association, "The nutrients in canned fruits and vegetables are sealed in because the fruits and vegetables are harvested at the peak of quality and usually canned within a few hours after they're picked." Also "... studies show that recipes using canned ingredients are similar in nutritional value and taste appeal to the same recipes made with fresh or frozen ingredients."

**ACTION PLAN:** If this is an idea you like, you CAN do it. Record "buy canned fruit" in your calendar/planner on the next day you plan to buy groceries.

## 5. The 100-Calorie Snack Attack Plan

"... often for snacks, people only need 100 calories to help control hunger. Only they're reaching for a candy bar or a bag of chips that in a small amount may be giving them more calories than they need. And it's not in a very big portion so it's not very satisfying," according to Dr. Barbara Rolls, author of "The Volumetrics Weight-Control Plan: Feel Full on Fewer Calories."

Fight back when you have a snack attack with some of these snacks that offer about 100 calories. (NOTE: Very active people may need larger portions



or a combination of these snacks.)

- ★ 2 to 3 cups of popcorn (check label)
- ★ 1 apple
- ★ 1 orange
- ★ ½ ounce nuts
- ★ 1 banana
- ★ 1 (8 ounce) glass skim or 1% milk
- ★ 6 to 8 ounce fat-free yogurt, artificially sweetened
- ★ 1 hard-cooked egg
- ★ Small bowl of cereal with ½ cup skim or 1% milk
- ★ 1 pear
- ★ 1 piece string cheese
- ★ 1 piece whole-wheat toast spread with 1 teaspoon spreadable fruit
- ★ ½ to 1 cup fruit canned in light or extra light syrup or its own juice (check label)
- ★ 1 bunch grapes
- ★ 2 cups fresh strawberries
- ★ 1 tube of yogurt
- ★ Small bowl of broth or tomato-based soup (check label)

**ACTION PLAN:** Keep this list somewhere, such as in your car, wallet or handbag, so it's always available when you shop. Put it there today.

## **6. Use Your Feet More So You Can Eat More**

The more you exercise, the more you can eat. And the easier it is to meet your nutrient needs when your diet is less limited.

Build in opportunities to walk more. Buy a pedometer and track your steps – try to build up to 10,000 or more a day. Here are some ways to add more steps to your day without starting an “official” walking program:

1. Use the bathroom farthest from your office at work. Use a bathroom on a different floor at home. Likewise, do the same when you're away at conferences and meetings.
2. Put on a backpack and walk for errands of about one mile away or less. For example, walk to buy an item from a nearby shopping center or to pick up your medications from the pharmacy.
3. Buy the type of carry-on luggage that makes it easy to walk in the airport when waiting to catch planes. For example, use a backpack or rolling luggage. There are many new models of rolling luggage small enough to put under your airplane seat in place of the tote bag you may be carrying.
4. Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible.
5. Take a “foot” rather than a “food” break when you need some time away from your work. Walk up and down a hall, walk around the building or block, go up and down the stairs, etc.

**ACTION PLAN:** The next time you're on your feet today, see how far they can take you!

## **7. STRESSED IS “DESSERTS” SPELLED BACKWARDS**

Rather than “medicate” yourself with food when the day is hectic, try this idea by Thich Nhat Hanh, a

Vietnamese monk and internationally acclaimed author. He suggests we use the ringing of the phone as a reminder to relax. He advises we stop whatever we're doing for a few seconds and take a deep relaxing breath during the first ring or two. And smile.

You'll feel better and, with the smile reflected in your voice, you may make the caller feel better, too! And that also may improve your mood.

ACTION PLAN: Try this the next time the phone rings today. And remember to smile.

## **START YOUR PLAN**

Remember, the more specific you are about when, where and how you'll start healthy new eating habits, and the more you repeat them, the greater your success. As well-known author and speaker Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The secret of your future is hidden in your daily routine."