

Why We Eat Junk

It seems like the more we eat junk food, the more we crave it even though unhealthy eating leads to weight gain, fat gain, and exhaustion. The more tired we become, the harder it is to turn away from the drive-throughs and microwavable foods. In turn, our bodies then lack the important nutrients to stay focused, strong, and to fight disease.

When we eat healthy, we feel better and have more energy -- our bodies are stronger, and we're better equipped to handle life. So why do we fall back to unhealthy choices?

Emotions

Emotional eating is when you eat when you are having big emotions like stress, worry, or depression. It's natural to want something really good when you are feeling really bad. It becomes a problem when we constantly try to "fix" our emotions by eating more and more.

Getting emotional help is key. If you're depressed, see your primary care provider, and they will help you. Depression is a disease that can be treated. If you are using food to make yourself feel better, try replacing your unhealthy emotional habits with exercise, walking, talking with friends, or relaxing more. Consider writing about your feelings instead of eating.

Habits

Habits are behaviors we do regularly without thinking. Changing them takes thought and commitment.¹ Sometimes our diet choices are just a bad habit. We may reach for a candy bar and a soda for a quick fix without even thinking about it.

Laziness

Sometimes we're just lazy. If we're honest with ourselves, we often reach for the junk food because it takes less effort than eating healthy.







Taste

We should probably admit it – we LIKE junk food! It's yummy! It's got the sugar, the salt, and the fat that tastes so good! When we eat it all the time, IT MAKES US SICK! But, if we choose the *healthier* choices most of the time, then we can splurge on *junk* occasionally.

Eating Healthy

So how DO we eat healthy?² To start, you're going to need a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, dairy, and good oils in your diet. Eat a diet low in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Look at the ingredients on the labels, and steer clear of things like high-fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, and any other ingredient that is not recognized as plain old food. The additives are not good for us, and can be harmful to a developing child.³ You can start by cutting way down on sodas, sweets, baked goods, and fast and processed foods. They are high in sugar, sodium, and saturated fats.⁴ Eating them too often can lead to heart disease, diabetes, weight-gain, and blood-sugar spikes.⁵

Food Group Amounts for 2,000 Calories a Day

				
2 cups	2 1/2 cups	6 ounces	5 1/2 ounces	3 cups
<p>Focus on whole fruits</p> <p>Focus on whole fruits that are fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.</p>	<p>Vary your veggies</p> <p>Choose a variety of colorful fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables—make sure to include dark green, red, and orange choices.</p>	<p>Make half your grains whole grains</p> <p>Find whole-grain foods by reading the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list.</p>	<p>Vary your protein routine</p> <p>Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.</p>	<p>Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt</p> <p>Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soy milk) to cut back on your saturated fat.</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Limit Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Limit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium to 2,300 milligrams a day. • Saturated fat to 22 grams a day. • Added sugars to 50 grams a day. </div> </div>				

Courtesy: United States Department of Agriculture. choosemyplate.gov¹¹

Eating healthy really isn't tough. It just means making little changes here and there. It's as simple as adding more fresh fruits and vegetables into your diet, preparing foods from scratch, drinking plenty of water, and cutting down on the fast and processed foods. Enjoy your food but eat less. Use a smaller plate at meals to help control the amount of food and calories you eat. Choose red, orange, or dark-green vegetables and eat more whole grains.

Do this most of the time, and then you can enjoy the fast-food splurges here and there. You might even find that you desire the junk less and less. Read the labels on the backs of food packages, or buy fresh foods that don't have labels, and limit saturated and trans fats, refined sugars, and additives you can't pronounce. Understand the reasons why you choose the foods you do. If you're an emotional eater, then look for a healthier outlet for your feelings. If eating junk food is a habit, then make a lifestyle plan to create new, better habits. Do this, and you will feel better, lose weight, and have more energy. You will also be teaching your children healthy eating habits too. Bon Appetit!

Resources include:

1. Lally, Phillippa, et al. "How Are Habits Formed: Modelling Habit Formation in the Real World." Wiley Online Library, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 16 July 2009, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ejsp.674. Accessed 11/24/2021
2. "Healthy Eating | Center for Young Women's Health." Center for Young Women's Health, Center for Young Women's Health, 29 Mar. 2021, youngwomenshealth.org/2012/08/09/healthy-eating/. Accessed 11/24/2021
3. Williams, Glenda, MD, Pediatrician, 31, January, 2019 Interview
4. "2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines." Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dec. 2015, health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/dietary-guidelines/previous-dietary-guidelines/2015. Accessed 11/24/2021
5. "What Foods Are in the Grains Group?" MyPlate, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains. Accessed 11/24/2021
6. "What Foods Are in the Proteins Food Group?" MyPlate, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/protein-foods. Accessed 11/24/2021
7. "Nutrition Tools: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents." Bright Futures, American Academy of Pediatrics, brightfutures.aap.org/Bright%20Futures%20Documents/BFNutrition3rdEdition_tools.pdf. Accessed 11/24/2021
8. "What Foods Are Included in the Dairy Group?" MyPlate, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/dairy. Accessed 11/24/2021
9. "Oils-Nutrients-Health." MyPlate, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/oils-nutrients-health. Accessed 1/31/2019
10. "MyPlate Plan." MyPlate, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan. Accessed 11/24/2021

Recipes

Power Omelet

Ingredients

Serves 1

- 2-3 eggs
- 1 tbsp milk (fat-free)
- 1/4 cup broccoli florets
- 1 bell pepper (any color) (cut into strips)
- ¼ cup fresh spinach leaves (cut off stems)
- 1/8 cup grated cheese
- 1/8 cup cooked chicken, cubed
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Olive Oil

Directions

1. Cut vegetables as directed.
2. Whisk eggs and milk in a medium mixing bowl.
3. Spread olive oil in a 10-inch non-stick skillet. Heat on medium setting.

To Cook Omelet

4. Add egg mixture to heated pan
5. When eggs firm up, spread broccoli, peppers, chicken, and cheese to one side of the omelet.
6. Fold the other half of the omelet over and let cook for 1 more minute.
7. Slide onto plate, and season to taste with salt and pepper.
8. Garnish with a little grated cheese or salsa.

Street Tacos

Ingredients

- Corn tortillas – regular or street taco size
- Shredded Cheese
- Shredded Cabbage
- Cilantro
- Plain Yogurt
- Chicken – cooked and shredded
- 1 can black beans drained and rinsed
- 1 bottle of Salsa
- Lime Juice, fresh or bottled

Street Tacos Continued

Directions

1. Lay out as many corn tortillas as you would like to eat.
2. Add beans, chicken, cabbage, cilantro, lime juice, and salsa to the tortillas
3. Top with cheese and a tbsp. of plain yogurt, and fold in half before eating.

Spaghetti Casserole

Ingredients

- 1 Pkg of whole wheat spaghetti noodles
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper chopped
- 1 onion chopped
- 2 cups of cooked chicken chopped
- 1 can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½ cup grated cheddar cheese
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Pepper to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°
2. In a pan of boiling water, add spaghetti and olive oil. Cook spaghetti according to instruction on box and set aside.
3. In a skillet, add 1 tbsp olive oil and heat on medium setting.
4. Add peppers, onions, and chicken to skillet cook until peppers and onion are soft. Pepper to taste and set aside.
5. In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients (setting aside ¼ cup of parmesan cheese) and mix well. Pour into a 9 x 13 baking dish and cover with foil.
6. Bake 20 minutes covered, then remove the foil and bake another 10 minutes uncovered.
7. Sprinkle over top with remaining ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese and serve.