

# Healthy Eating for a Hectic Lifestyle

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It seems that everyone is living life on the run and going in one hundred directions. Living this way often leads people to make unhealthy food choices. We tend to multitask, eat on the run and rely on convenience foods. Going through a drive-thru or eating a frozen dinner seems easier than planning and cooking a healthy meal, but what is this kind of lifestyle doing to our health? We all have only 24 hours in a day, but we can make better choices and break bad habits in the time we have. Making healthier food choices at the store, eating out or snacking at home does not take any additional time; it takes willpower to make a better decision.



## What Can We Do to Eat Healthier When Busy?

The first thing you must do is make the choice to do something healthy for you and your family. Talk with your doctor regarding your overall health and how food choices will affect medications or diet plans you may currently be on. Set a healthy weight goal and see if eating healthier will reduce the amount of medications you may currently take for things such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol or heart disease.

Once you have decided to make healthier choices, you need to educate yourself on healthy eating habits. Begin to think of food as fuel for your body. Ask yourself these questions: “What is this particular food doing for my body?”; “Is it giving me vitamins to help my vision, memory or bones? Or is it adding unwanted sugar, fat and weight to my body?”; “What benefit am I getting by eating this?”

According to [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov), we need the proper portions of five food groups. Within a 24-hour period, we should eat 3 servings of low-fat dairy, 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, 3 servings of lean protein and 3 servings of whole grains. The Mayo Clinic suggests we

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should drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day (64 ounces or about 2 liters).

When eating a balanced meal of proper portion sizes, it may be easier to eat three small meals and three small snacks. This will help ensure you are eating all the food groups and not feeling too hungry in between meals.

When eating healthy, you must plan and cook healthy meals. Once a week, take an hour to plan meals for the week – this will keep you from making bad decisions. When thinking about your meals, focus on what vegetables you can make first, then add lean protein and whole grains. Cook when you have time and cook enough for leftovers. Once done with your meal, package leftovers in grab and go portion sizes. You can freeze leftovers



as well for an easy meal later in the month. There are several websites that teach how to “cook once, eat for a week or month” and “freezer meals for a month.” Slow cookers are also an easy way to have a healthy dinner ready when you walk in the door. Use caution with slow cooker recipes; many call for cream sauces and cheese. Use your slow cooker to cook lean meats in broth, which is a healthier option.

When hungry, we often grab the first thing we see to eat. This can be a bag of chips, cookies on the counter or ice cream in the freezer. Try these healthy “grab and go” snacks: hard-boiled eggs, frozen grapes and almonds.

When eating out, be mindful of making healthy choices. Most restaurants now have the calories listed on their menus. When eating out, choose

water instead of soda or sweetened teas; choose steamed, baked, poached, roasted, broiled or grilled foods; skip the bread; get the salad dressing on the side and dip your fork in it instead of pouring it on the salad; split your plate in half and box up half of it for later.

Choosing to eat healthy is often a different way of thinking for many of us.

- Pay attention to what you are eating.
- Pay attention to when you are eating.
- Pay attention while eating.

## Make a Plan and Start Today!

What changes are you willing to make? Start off by breaking habits and making small changes in the beginning, then every few months make an additional change. It takes time to change bad habits, but it can be done. Making healthy food choices does not require any change to your hectic lifestyle, it just requires a conscious choice to be healthier and do something for yourself.

## Resources

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

[www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)

[www.fitnessmagazine.com/recipes/healthy-eating/on-the-go/healthy-fast-foods/](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/recipes/healthy-eating/on-the-go/healthy-fast-foods/)

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