

The No-Diet Diet: Your New Healthy Eating Plan 2020

First things first: To start eating a more nutritious diet (and stay with it), you need the right mind-set. As anyone who has abandoned a meal plan after day three can attest, that's no easy trick. How do you get yourself to choose virtue over comfort- a side of roasted cauliflower or French fries, or a bowl of berries over cheesecake? Start by following these six smart, totally doable strategies:

1. Make your plate pretty: Think of a farmer's market and the way that vendors put produce in boxes and arrange the radishes is enticing. It is an artistic experience. Try to create the same visual seduction when putting together your own dishes at home. That way, eating dinner will be a sensory treat in more ways than one.
2. Try to remember exactly how bad you felt after the last time that you ordered onion rings. To thwart unfortunate cravings, try to remember that when you don't eat well, chances are that you don't feel well, so it's a self-reinforcing process. Eating highly processed foods can cause excessive thirst from the salt content, nausea from the fillers and additives, and restless sleep. Eat well to feel well.
3. Training yourself to stop craving salty, sugary, and fatty foods can't be a cognitive process alone. It has to be emotional too. That's where your imagination comes in. Many of us connect positive, nostalgic feelings with unhealthy foods. (A corn dog may conjure up a childhood memory of a summer day at a carnival.) Try to make equally affirmative connotations with good-for-you dishes. (Think of your grandmother's legendary vegetable soup.) Once you activate that circuitry, you will be able to recognize that this desire for junk is simply your brain playing a trick on you. That realization allows you to move on to better things to eat.
4. Always have fresh and long-lasting foods in your refrigerator. So, be sure to keep the sturdiest produce on hand: carrots, red cabbage, bell peppers, and romaine lettuce. They will all last up to a week.
5. If reducing the amount of meat that you eat is your goal, treat protein like a side dish. Skip the bacon for breakfast and chicken salad for lunch in order to enjoy a juicy fillet at night- guilt-free. There is nothing wrong with eating steak or other rich dishes, as long as you are eating plants most of the time.
6. Always eat dessert. Tough advice, right? Have one dessert a day. This teaches balance and moderation. So, go ahead, have a small dish of ice cream. Everyone needs a little decadence now and then.

Once, we were told that eating nutritiously simply required choosing from four basic groups (meat, fish, and legumes; dairy; grains; vegetables and fruits). Today the model is different, but

the math is just as easy to remember: Half of your plate should contain vegetables and fruits; one-quarter should be lean protein; and the last quarter, whole grains.

Why the shift? Produce is loaded with essential vitamins and antioxidants. It also has lots of fiber, which prevents blood sugar spikes (so you don't get hungry again right away.) Lean protein (salmon, chicken) makes you feel full longer, and whole grains, like barley and bulgar are nutrient-packed alternatives to processed carbs. The final component: healthy plant-based fats, found in olive oil and avocados, which are unsaturated and cholesterol-free, unlike animal fats.

Remember: Eat health to feel healthy!