KAISER PERMANENTE®

Set healthy eating goals

one small step at a time

Making successful changes means creating the right plan for your specific needs.

Plans for change usually involve a few simple steps: Setting your goal, tracking progress, rewarding success, and managing any setbacks in a healthy, positive way.

HealthMedia® Nourish® will get you started by creating a custom healthy eating plan.

HealthMedia® Balance® can help you lose weight with a personalized eating, exercise, and behavior-change plan.

Set your goal

Create specific, realistic goals to improve your diet.

Decide where you want to start.
Focus on one small goal at a time. This could be eating a healthy breakfast, being sure to get 6 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, or cutting back the number of times you eat fast foods to once a week.

Set up a realistic timeline for meeting your goals.
The self-confidence you get from accomplishing a small goal helps keep you on your path for achieving your big goal.

Write down your goals and why you want to achieve them.
Post them where you will constantly see them. This provides you with clear direction and also the motivation to keep at it.

Involve your family and friends.
They can provide support and encouragement.

When you're ready, set a new healthy eating goal.
As your small changes add up, you'll see that you've made significant changes to your eating habits without too much fuss or interruption to your life.

Track your progress

It's important to track your progress when you are trying to change a habit. It helps you to see if you're meeting your goals and serves as a reminder to keep trying.

Record the healthy things you do.
Write it down in a notebook or food diary (PDF) to help track your progress. You can also look this over when you begin to doubt yourself or your abilities.

Pay attention to how you feel.
Can you notice any difference when you're eating better? Do you feel different when you eat poorly? Have your food preferences changed?

Consider tests to measure success.
You and your doctor may decide that certain tests will help see if your diet and exercise plans are working. Talk to your doctor about which tests to have and how often to have them.

Reward yourself

When you reach your goal, reward yourself in a healthy way.

Reward every success, no matter how small.
Tie each reward to a specific, measurable goal, such as eating 3 servings of vegetables every day for a week.

Make your rewards healthy ones.
Pick a nonfood reward such as the latest tech gadget, a night at the movies, or a massage. Or choose something that will help you maintain your healthy eating habits, such as a new cookbook or a cooking class.

Big success? Big reward.
When you meet challenging goals, reward your hard work with something special.

Manage setbacks

Setbacks are a natural part of the process. The secret to continued success is learning how to manage these setbacks as you progress toward your goal.

Learn from mistakes.
Use your setback as a chance to evaluate what went wrong, modify your plan so that you're more likely to succeed, and reapply yourself to reaching your goal.

Keep your favorites on the menu.
Leave room for your favorite foods in small doses. If you completely cut out what you love to eat, you may start to feel deprived and are likely to give up on your healthy eating goal.

Don't give up!
Even if you splurge on your favorite foods, don’t give up your plan altogether. You can resume your diet at the next meal.

Get more inspiration for making positive changes.

Related links

Do fad diets really work?
How to curb cravings
Make change a habit
Programs to get you started
The healthy kitchen

Reviewed by: Carole Bartolotto, MA, RD, May 2011
Additional Kaiser Permanente reviewers

©2011 Kaiser Permanente

© Kaiser Permanente, 2012