

Top 15 Ways to Keep a Healthy You

1. Don't go on a very low calorie diet—**DIETS DON'T WORK!**

Frequent dieting when you're young makes it harder to lose weight when you're older. The best way to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight is to increase exercise and cut out empty calorie foods that are rich in sugar and fat. Young people need approximately 1800 to 2000 calories every day for normal growth and energy needs; more if they are athletes.

2. Use the Food Pyramid to help you get a wide variety of foods from the different groups, but make healthy choices within each. Choose whole grains like brown rice and whole wheat bread; choose lower fat protein foods such as baked/broiled/stewed fish or chicken, lean meats, tofu, beans, nuts, and seeds.

3. Get real about serving sizes—super size value deals are often major nutritional disasters. What's considered one serving size of meat, for example, is not more than the size of a deck of cards; 1/2 cup makes a serving of grains.

4. Eat breakfast every day.

According to Michael Jordan, the best thing you can do for yourself is to “eat breakfast every day!” It's the most important meal of the day—providing the fuel you need to be at you best. Studies show that breakfast eaters do better at school, get sick less often, and are better athletes. So, if you don't get breakfast at home, get it at school!

5. Read It Before You Eat It!

The only way to really know what's in the food you're eating is to check the Ingredient and Nutrition Facts label. Skip the products that sound like they've been produced in a chemical laboratory and note: ingredients are listed in order by their weight—the main one's listed first, they lay it on you straight!

6. Bring healthy foods along!

Instead of relying on junky convenience foods when you're out on the run, bring your own with you. You'll even save money along with nutrition if you bring along a low-fat yogurt, trail mix, popcorn, sandwiches, bagels, fruit, pretzels, baby carrots, water or fruit juice from home.

7. Go Fresh! Enjoy eating at least five fresh fruits and vegetables a day! Grab a fruit or salad for a snack. Add sprouts, lettuce, and tomatoes to your sandwiches. Keep fruit salad, washed fruit, or vegetable salad in the fridge for easy access. Make a fruit juice spritzer (half seltzer, half fruit juice) instead of soda. Nuke a potato and add a dab of yogurt. Fruits and veggies are packed with nutrients, low in calories and do so much for us: strengthen our immune systems, help prevent sickness, build healthy skin, nails, and hair, and gives us what we need to perform every body process at its best.

8. Discover new foods!

Have fun experimenting with foods and recipes from other cultures emphasizing whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and

lower fat protein foods. Check with your family, friends, cookbooks, or the web for new ideas. Explore ethnic food, whole food, and health food stores. Grow your own sprouts on the windowsill, shop at a Farmer's Market, plant a summer garden.

9. Cut the Fat!

Read The Nutrition Facts Labels and choose foods with less fat. (4 g of fat = 1 teaspoon of fat). It's easy to make lower fat substitutions for junkfood such as pretzels instead of potato chips, fruit instead of fast food pies. Cut down on butter, margarine, and mayo, (use ketchup or mustard on sandwiches); switch to lower fat dressings and ask fast food places to "hold the sauces". Switch to 1% or skim milk, low-fat yogurt, part skim cheese, frozen yogurt.

10. Kick the Soda Habit!

Here's a sure way to cut out empty calories. Each can of soda has ten teaspoons of sugar or 160 completely empty calories. Studies show that with each can of soda a kid drinks, his risk of obesity rises. The average teen drinks over 750 cans of soda a year; that's over fifty pounds of sugar... phosphoric acid which eats away at tooth enamel, making cavities easy to form, and caffeine which leeches calcium from your bones. It also represents over \$500 directly from your pockets into the pockets of the soft drink industry! For a natural soda, combine your favorite fruit juice half and half with seltzer and save your money for more important things!

11. Listen to your body signals.

Try to eat slowly—and enjoy your food. It takes your brain 20 minutes to realize that you're full, so take your time. Try to recognize what your body really needs—sleep when you're tired; water when you're thirsty; food when you're hungry; exercise when you're groggy; relaxation when stressed out. Keep a list of things you like to do that you can refer to instead of eating or watching TV when you're bored.

12. Try not to mix eating with other activities, especially like watching TV.

It's easy to eat more, especially of the kind of junk foods advertised, when you eat while sitting in front of the tube.

13. Not to be boring, but moderation usually is the best policy.

Try not to say "never", especially to your favorite foods. Self-denial is a big reason why dieting doesn't work; when you deny yourself what you want to eat, you often wind up eating more of it as soon as your "willpower" wanes. So, enjoy a little of it and move on

14. Enjoy being active!

Find some activities you like to do so you'll keep on doing them. Walk with your friends or form a walk and talk club where you go on walks and get to talk about stuff you're interested in. Learn a new skill like hip hop dancing, yoga, Tai-Chi, karate, or mountain climbing. Participate in sports like basketball, softball, volleyball, or soccer; get your family to go on outdoor adventure; have fun! Dance or work out to MTV, an exercise show or a fitness video from the library. Make the most of gym class.

Always try to take the active way out—take the stairs instead of the elevator, walk and bike whenever you safely can instead of taking the bus. Exercise is a great stress reducer, it builds stronger bones, and can help your body burn calories more efficiently.

15. Appreciate your body for all that it does for you! Try not to compare yourself with others, especially the unrealistic images of “beauty” promoted by the media. Spend

your energy, instead on recognizing your special qualities and all the great stuff your body does for you. Forget about the images from magazines, movies, TV, and super thin models—they’re usually just trying to sell you something that you don’t really need.

Remember--everybody is different, and different is a great thing! And, while you’re at it, try to feed healthy messages to your mind as you feed healthy food to your body!