Healthy Eating – One Step at a Time

You promised to eat right this year – real foods instead of processed foods; more fruits and vegetables; less sugar; good oils; more fish, poultry, and beans and less red meat – but it just isn’t happening. Instead of trying to change your whole routine, take one simple step toward healthier eating ...

Choose one meal – breakfast, lunch, OR dinner – and always make it healthy. Whichever meal generally leaves you most in control, mark that as your “healthy meal.” Plan in advance what you’ll eat, have healthy foods on hand for it, and always eat right at that meal.

Add one specific good-for-you food to your diet. Maybe you’ll decide to pledge your loyalty to olive oil. Then toss out all other cooking oils, and use only olive oil to dress your salads and prepare your foods. Whatever healthy food you choose, incorporate it into your everyday meals.

One recipe at a time, revise your recipe box. One delicious, nutritious recipe IN; one old, unhealthy recipe OUT. Selections of healthy recipes that taste great are everywhere, so slowly upgrading to healthy menus should be easy.

When you eat out, decide what you want and then make one healthy improvement to it before placing your order.

When you eat at home, eat more slowly. Chew your food 30+ times. Think about what you’re eating. You’ll be eating less and enjoying it more.

Sometimes improvements are best begun one step at a time.

March Is National Nutrition Month

Prayer: I struggle to eat well, Listener of my Prayers. Lead me to the way to take better care of myself. Give me confidence to begin in small steps. Amen.

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Your Advocate

Meet Sara Swiderski

Swiderski is Senior Clinical Dietician at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge. Her specialty is renal nutrition.

Sara Swiderski’s focus on nutrition began when her interest in science became a love of food science and cooking. “My grandfather was a big influence on me, too. He was a cook in the army and convinced me that the food you eat affects you. It’s true that you are what you eat.”

Simple foods are the mainstay of Swiderski’s own diet – whole wheat toast with peanut butter and low-sugar jelly and a banana is a typical breakfast. “But we all have challenges – delectable foods, sweets” she admits. “If you don’t smoke or drink, you sometimes use food itself for comfort.”

Time presents several challenges to eating right. “When you’re pressed for time, you can end up at a fast food place! If you do, at least choose something relatively healthy,” she advises. “And when we eat too fast, we generally eat too much. It’s so much better to take time – respect the food and the person who prepared it for you.”

Thirst, too, can be problematic. “The brain’s signal for thirst simply isn’t as strong when we’re eating, so we might not realize that we’re actually thirsty not hungry,” she warns.

Renal nutrition is Swiderski’s specialty. “Kidney disease makes food selections and portion sizes even more critical. I love working with kidney patients because I can see a difference in their energy levels as they move to a more nutritious diet,” she says with zeal. “It’s like wow! Because of my instruction and my patient’s willingness to learn something new, that person is in a better place in life!”

- Advocatehealth.com
- niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrition (Natl Inst of Diabetes/Digestive/Kidney Diseases)
- pediatrics.about.com/cps/fastfood (Nutrition Facts: Fast Food Restaurants)
- eatright.org

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