



Lady of America Newsletter – June 2010 – Sweet Summer

Eating: Getting the Most Out of What You Eat

Getting the most out of what you eat is key to eating healthy and maintaining a good weight or losing weight. The marketplace is flooded with processed foods and the messages about the benefits of eating whole food and filling up on high-volume foods. As easy as it sounds, it can become confusing.



No matter if you are trying to lose weight or maintain your current weight, eating healthy is about feeling satisfied and making better food choices that ultimately help your satiety. When you've had too much to eat, your let's you know — bloat, stomach ache, etc. It is important to recognize and respond to your body's signals so that you can eat without over-eating.

To help its members recognize their comfort zone, Weight Watchers suggests members imagine their stomach as a balloon. When your stomach is empty, you may experience an empty feeling or rumbling and a decrease in your energy level. When you've had a sufficient amount of food, the hunger feeling goes away, your stomach feels satisfied and you don't feel like eating any more. If you ignore the signals and you continue to eat your stomach will begin to feel uncomfortable, like it is ready to burst.

Weight Watchers urges members to consider their comfort zone — before and after a meal — on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being very hungry or ravenous to 5 being stuffed. The goal is to stay within the comfort zone of 3 or 4.

It makes sense that to reach the comfort zone you should eat. But not all healthy food or good-for-you food is created equal. Eating the *right* foods will not only help you stay satisfied longer, but can help maintain healthy weight, improve cholesterol, triglycerides and other blood fats, lower blood pressure and help keep heart attacks at bay.

“Many times people tell me they had a piece of fruit as a snack but they were starving an hour later,” said Tracy Gensler, MS, RD and a Best Life nutritionist. “Since fruit contains mostly carbohydrates, I like to recommend that people include a little bit of fat and protein with carbohydrates each time they eat. This helps to help level off blood sugar and stave off overeating.”

Gensler suggests an apple with two tablespoons of nuts, a slice of whole wheat bread spread with one tablespoon of peanut butter or a slice of low-fat cheese with eight small whole wheat crackers.

“Fiber also plays a part in helping people stay full, so I recommend that people select bread, cereal, crackers and pasta with at least 2 grams of fiber per serving. Even better, I ask them to look for the word

‘whole’ on the ingredients list to be sure they are getting whole grains, which are rich in antioxidants, B vitamins, vitamin E, magnesium, iron and fiber. A diet rich in whole grains is linked to a reduced risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and obesity,” Gensler added.

Another way to get the most of what you eat is to fill up on foods that provide a lot of volume for relatively few calories — these foods are what nutritionists and dieticians refer to as “calorie-dense foods.” For example, ¼ cup of raisins and 1 and 2/3 cups of American grapes have the same number of calories, but not only do you get more to eat with the grapes, you’ll probably feel more satisfied. Another example is eating an orange instead of drinking orange juice.

Satiating high-volume foods include vegetables and whole grains. “If you’re watching your weight, it’s a good idea to limit foods that are more calorie-dense. Some healthier foods like nuts, oils and dried fruit are more calorie-dense. So I like to recommend that people measure these foods,” added Gensler.

To illustrate how much more food you can get by eating more calorie-dense foods, consider

3 cups spinach, carrots and tomato salad (50 calories) vs. 13 small pieces vegetable tempura (battered and fried Asian-style vegetable dish (150 calories) — you get the benefit of the added water and fiber in the spinach salad to take up more room in your stomach for less calories.

“The same goes for some drinks. Many times people ask me about including fruit juice in their diet, and I ask them to limit fruit juice to 4 ounces per day. It’s easy to drink more calories than you need since juice doesn’t help fill you up. For example, a small orange has 50 calories, while a half-cup of orange juice has 56 calories,” said Gensler.

Don’t forget about including a lean protein — fish, skinless chicken breast, low-fat or non-fat dairy — also contribute to satiety. “That’s why, for maximum satisfaction, you might want to make sure your meals also contain some lean protein, said Karen Miller-Kovach, MS, RD, chief scientist for Weight Watchers.

As for processed foods, Gensler said some foods, like whole grain cereal, canned soup or soy milk, can be part of a healthful diet. If you’re concerned about additives or artificial ingredients, check the ingredients list to be sure, or look for the 100% natural label. “This means that the food does not contain artificial ingredients, has met minimal processing requirements and doesn’t contain partially hydrogenated oils,” she added.

As you eat more calorie-dense, good-for-you foods that fill you up on a regular basis, you will find yourself automatically choosing them over less caloric options. Remember, it takes a minimum of two weeks to change a habit.

Here are some tips to help you stay satisfied throughout the day without adding more calories.

1. Start your lunch and dinner with a cup of broth-based soup or a small salad with reduced-fat or low-fat dressing, used sparingly.
2. Use smaller plates. Tracy Gensler, MS, RD and a Best Life nutritionist, suggests eating on a 9-inch plate and dividing it in half. Then, divide one of the halves into half. Fill the large half with vegetables and fruit. In one ¼ of the plate, fill a lean protein and in the last ¼ a whole grain.

3. Snack on fruit and vegetables and add vegetables to meals — stews, soups, pasta, etc.

4. Dr. Mehmet Oz strongly recommends staying away from high-fructose corn syrup (commonly found in soft drinks), sugar, enriched flour, trans fat and saturated fat. Instead, “start with foods that don’t need a label, like fresh fruits and vegetables. If they’re coming out of the ground looking the way they look when you eat them, they’re good for you in general,” he said.
5. Eat when you are hungry or eat every 3 hours. Doing so will keep you satisfied, not famished.
6. Eat one ounce of nuts each day.

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