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# ***Eating Better***

## **Your Wellness Counts**



**Your Wellness Counts: *Eating Better* – May 2017**

New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
Rutgers UBHC Technical Assistance Center

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- **What Does “Eating Better” Mean?** (page 4)
- **Eating Better When Dining Out** (page 22)
- **Special Considerations for a Person in Recovery** (page 25)

Welcome to **Your Wellness Counts**, the **Eating Better** Module. Some of the topics that we’ll discuss together are listed above. If you’d like, you can cover this module’s information and activities on your own. You can also discuss this module, along with your thoughts, feelings, and experiences, with a support person or group. The choice is yours.

The information and activities in this module can help you make your own choices about your eating habits. You should read through this module on **Eating Better** if:

1. You want to learn more about healthy eating,
2. You’re not sure if you want to work on eating better, OR
3. You already know you want to change the way you eat.



This module of Your Wellness Counts is divided into 3 sections:

1. **Thinking About Eating Better** – if you’re thinking about eating better (page 6)
2. **Doing It - Eating Better** – if you feel confident you’re ready now (page 16)
3. **Tracking It – Eating Better** – if you’d like to keep track of your progress (page 28)

At the end of this Module, we give you links to additional online resources!

Before you decide where to start, we have some frequently asked questions (FAQ’s) we’d like you to consider.

Remember—you are in charge of how you use **Your Wellness Counts!** You decide how the ideas in **Eating Better** apply to you.



## Want to Sample *Eating Better*?

You may be wondering what ***Eating Better*** is all about and if considering this will be worth your time and effort. Here are some questions that you may have and some responses to help you decide.

● **What do you mean by “eating better”?**

Eating better can mean many things. Eating a nourishing diet means focusing on foods and beverages that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight, promote health, and prevent disease.

● **Why would I want to eat better?**

For some people, having a healthy weight is most important. To others, managing or avoiding diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure is enough of an incentive. Many people report that eating better gives them more energy and helps them think more clearly. There are other benefits, too, in addition to your physical health. Making small changes in your eating habits can help your confidence in accomplishing things or may help you to have some healthy fun with friends. As you go through this module on ***Eating Better***, you will discover what may motivate you.

● **Why can't I just eat what I want?**

Everyone has different tastes. This is partly a matter of choice, but our family and cultural traditions can also influence our food choices. Many experts say there are no wrong choices but that certain foods should be eaten more often and other foods should be limited to special occasions. Since this tool, **Your Wellness Counts**, is self-directed, you can decide how to use the information and the ideas in ***Eating Better***.

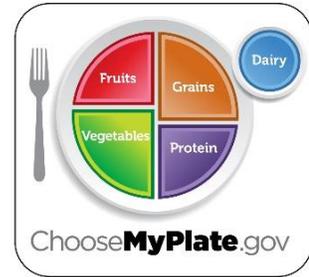
● **I have tried to eat better but it's just too hard.**

Changing any habit can be difficult. Many of our eating patterns are established early in life which can make change challenging. ***Eating Better*** focuses on exploring possibilities rather than finding exact answers. Think about what you are willing and able to do. Take one small step at a time—you can try things out and if it doesn't work, you can try again or move on to something else you would prefer.



## Thinking About Eating Better

Thinking about eating better begins by asking yourself, “How am I doing with my eating?” You can think about this by completing the checklist below. The items are adapted from the U.S. Dietary Guidelines.\* For more information about each item, see page 4.



<b>Dietary Guidelines Self-Assessment</b> “USDA does not endorse any products, services, or organizations.”	Always or Often	Sometimes	Rarely or Never
1. I eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.			
2. I make half my plate fruits and vegetables.			
3. I make at least half my grains whole grains.			
4. If I drink milk, I choose fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.			
5. I eat a variety of protein foods.			
6. I avoid processed meats (like bologna).			
7. I include beans, seeds, nuts, and fish every week.			
8. I am careful to eat reasonable-sized portions.			
9. I avoid food and drinks that are high in sugar.			
10. I drink water instead of soda or juice.			



How does your current way of eating compare with the Dietary Guidelines?



Adapted from References and Resources: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) & \* <http://health.gov/> (search for “2015 Dietary Guidelines”)



## What Does “Eating Better” Mean?

**Eating better means eating a healthier diet.** The list below describes the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Of course, it is up to you to decide *how* to put these guidelines into action. Here is a summary of the main points:

- 1. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.** Including many different vegetables and whole fruits is part of a healthy eating pattern, especially vegetables of different colors, such as sweet potatoes (orange), tomatoes (red), and broccoli (dark green). At meals, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. For healthy snacks, choose fruits and vegetables.
- 
- 2. Choose whole grains.** One way to do this is to make half your grains whole grains. This means choosing a whole grain product (like whole-wheat bread or brown rice) instead of a refined product (like white bread or white rice). Check the ingredient list. Whole grain should be the first ingredient listed (or second, after water).
  - 3. Drink fat-free or low fat milk.** If you have dairy, such as milk, yogurt, or cheese, a fat-free or low-fat option may be best. The same is true if you prefer soy milk, almond milk, or some other non-dairy option. Whole milk has more calories and more saturated fat, so switching to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk can be a healthier option.
  - 4. Eat a variety of protein foods.** Proteins include meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, beans, peas, seeds, and nuts. Eating seafood once or twice a week is a great plan. Limit processed meats (like bologna) and red meat, and choose lean (low fat) options. Beans add healthy fiber as well as protein. Nuts and seeds contain healthy oils.
  - 5. Watch your portion size!** You can teach yourself to eat less by using a smaller plate, bowl, and glass. When you eat out, choose the smaller portion, share the meal with someone or take part of the meal home.
  - 6. Limit your sugar intake.** Choose to drink water or unsweetened beverages (iced tea, seltzer) to reduce calories. By avoiding soda, juice, energy drinks and sports drinks, you can drastically cut down the amount of added sugar in your diet.



Adapted from References and Resources: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) &  
\* <http://health.gov/> (search for “2015 Dietary Guidelines”)



## How Ready Are You to Eat Better?

How many times have you thought or said to yourself, “I really wish I could lose some weight” or “I want to start a diet?” **Wanting** to do something and actually **doing it** can be two different things. Sometimes it can be helpful to find out how “ready” we are to do something new or challenging. When we try to change before we are ready, we can become discouraged by initial setbacks and may simply give up trying.

Try asking yourself the following question:



On a scale of 1 to 10, with “1” meaning you are *not ready at all* and “10” meaning you are *absolutely ready*, how would you rate your “readiness” to eat better right now?



1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

1 = Not ready at all

10 = Absolutely ready

What are your thoughts and feelings about how ready you are to eat better today?

We’ve divided this module into three sections:



1. **Thinking About Eating Better** – if you’re thinking about it (page 6)
2. **Doing It - Eating Better** – if you feel confident you want to plan to eat better now (page 16)
3. **Tracking It – Eating Better** – if you’d like to keep track of your progress (page 28)



You can now go to the section of this module that you think is right for you.



## What Do You Think About Eating Better?

One reason that people don't want to change their eating habits is that it can seem too difficult to give up food that tastes so good! Processed foods are designed to be tasty, are often inexpensive, but tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt. Although you may temporarily enjoy these foods, negative long-term effects are likely.

There can be many challenges about eating better. It's easy to say, "just stop eating unhealthy food," but can be hard to do. Here are some things people have said about both sides of eating better:

What I <b>like</b> about eating better	What I <b>dislike</b> about eating better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will look better.</li> <li>• I can enjoy eating better with another person.</li> <li>• I can feel a sense of accomplishment and mastery.</li> <li>• I want to be healthier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy the taste of unhealthy foods.</li> <li>• I can't afford healthier foods.</li> <li>• I don't have any control over what I eat. Those choices are made by someone else.</li> </ul>

This "decisional balance" is a tool that can help you to choose what's best for you by looking at the pros (likes, advantages) and cons (dislikes, disadvantages) of eating better. It helps you explore any mixed thoughts and feelings you may have about possibly changing. You can keep reading this module to better understand the benefits & challenges you may face with eating better. Or you can skip ahead now to complete your own personal decisional balance on page 12.



What are your initial thoughts on what you like and don't like about eating better?



## Eat Better by Enjoying Food with Others

One way to make eating healthier more enjoyable is to do it with other people. Getting together with someone often involves food or drink – lunch in a café, a home-cooked meal, or a cup of coffee at a diner. Eating better when you are with someone is one way to lift your mood and a way that you can support each another in reaching your wellness goals. *By eating better with others, you can improve your physical, social, and emotional health all at the same time.*



If you were able to enjoy eating healthier with someone, how would that affect you physically, socially and emotionally? What other areas of your overall wellness could be affected?

If you think it's too hard to meet up with someone because of transportation or money issues, there are other ways you can enjoy each other's company while keeping your focus on eating better. Which ones seem interesting and possible for you?

- Share a meal to save some money (and some calories).
- Meet for tea/coffee or a snack instead of drinking alcohol or eating a more expensive meal.
- Invite someone to your home to enjoy healthy food there.
- Share healthy eating ideas and recipes.
- Cook something healthy together.
- Shop for groceries together.
- Call, text, or share on social media about how you're eating better.
- Discuss with peers how your day program, self-help meeting, or residence can eat better. Examples include planning for "meatless Mondays," "fruit Tuesdays," or "salad Sundays."
- Add your great idea: \_\_\_\_\_



## Eating Better Reduces the Risk for Metabolic Syndrome

One important thing to consider is how eating better reduces your risk of Metabolic Syndrome. The US National Institutes of Health defines Metabolic Syndrome as “a group of risk factors that raises your risk for heart disease and other health problems, such as diabetes and stroke.” *For more on Metabolic Syndrome, see Wellness Any Way, page 8.*

### FYI - For Your Information

People with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, are about two to three times as likely to have Metabolic Syndrome as the general population.\*

Healthy eating habits and increased physical activity (see the module of Your Wellness Counts on **Moving More**) are critical lifestyle choices necessary to reduce or manage your risk of serious health problems. Eating healthier includes eating **LESS** of foods with high amounts of:

- Saturated fat (such as fatty beef, poultry with skin, butter)
- Trans fat (such as french fries, cookies, and cakes)
- Cholesterol (such as beef, eggs, whole milk)
- Sugar (such as high fructose corn syrup, soda, donuts)

Additional steps in addressing Metabolic Syndrome include talking to your doctor about lowering your risk and **Shared Decision Making** about your medication. You may believe there's little you can do about your physical health. The truth is that you can make simple choices daily, including what you eat, that can *directly* impact your physical wellness.



Eating better can reduce the risk of Metabolic Syndrome. How does this affect your thoughts about eating better?



\*Reference: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25528926](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25528926)  
Resource: <http://www.nami.org/> (search for “Metabolic Syndrome”)



## What are *Your* Reasons for Eating Better?

People decide to eat better for a number of good reasons. Some may want to feel a sense of pride in being able to accomplish something. Others may want to live a longer or have a more satisfying life. Eating better can also be a healthy way to connect with peers, friends or family.

Take a look at the list of benefits below from ***Eating Better***.  
Which ones apply to you?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look better</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feel more confident</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feel more in control of your weight</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support family/friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with family/friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fit in your old clothes or buy a smaller size</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy trying new foods</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experience how healthy foods affect you</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Socialize by sharing new recipes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feel good about yourself</li> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> Your great idea: _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Improve overall health</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have more energy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce stress/sadness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a role model</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce health risks/problems</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help you recover from the negative effects of alcohol/drugs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Get out of the house more</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Live longer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Add variety of foods to your life</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look forward to something</li> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> Your great idea: _____</li> </ul>
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What are your top three reasons for wanting to eat better?



## Eating Better on a Budget



One of the most common challenges about eating better is that healthier food can be more expensive. And these days, every dollar counts! However, depending on your choices, *you can eat better on a budget*.

The costs of fruits and vegetables can be less than many snack foods. For example, bananas (18 cents per portion), carrots (19 cents per portion) and oranges (20 cents per portion) are less expensive than potato chips (27 cents), donuts (36 cents), or ice cream (39 cents).\*

Here are some ideas to help you eat better, given your finances.

- \$ Check stores for sales and coupons, and consider a store discount card.
- \$ Buy a small amount of any new foods so you can test if you like it.
- \$ Compare similar products by looking at the “cost per unit” information (usually located on the shelf next to the actual price).
- \$ Buy fruits and vegetables in season. If you don’t plan to eat them all right away, buy some that still need time to ripen.
- \$ Buy low-cost options all year round. Beans and peas are good sources for protein. Fresh apples, carrots, and frozen fruits and vegetables are also good choices.
- \$ Prepare a large batch of your favorite meal. Place enough food for 1 or 2 meals in containers. Share with a friend or freeze for later use.



How can you eat better and still stay within your budget?



\*Reference: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/> (search for “snack substitutions”)  
Resource: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/> (search for “eating on a budget”)



## Gaining More Control of What You Eat

Some people say that they *want* to eat healthier but they feel or believe that they *can't* because they have little or no control over the food available to them. This can occur when living in a residence or inpatient facility where other people are responsible for buying the food, planning the meal, and even deciding how much food is given to you. Even with these issues, you still have some options:

- Speak up. Voice your opinion on what you'd prefer so you can plan to eat better.
- Ask for help. Think of who can help you to have more input in your food choices, like a friend or family member, support staff, a nurse, a peer specialist, a nutritionist, or an advocacy group.
- Offer specific suggestions. For example, ask for a salad with meals. Ask for fresh fruit or fresh vegetables.
- Ask if better food options can be offered for a short trial period like a week or a month. It can be easier to try something new for a limited time. You can also ask to have less healthy options offered less frequently.
- Choose small things within your control. You can make wise decisions.
  - Eat what is healthy first. If veggies are given, you can start with them.
  - Avoid extra calories. For example, don't add butter, limit sugar in coffee/tea, skip bread, and choose low-fat milk and cheese.
  - Drink water instead of soda, juice, energy drinks, or alcohol.
  - Eat a smaller amount of what is given to you.



What will you do to get more control over making better food choices?



**Putting it all together – Your “Decisional Balance”**

To help organize your thoughts on what you like and don’t like about eating better, you can use the following chart. This “Decisional Balance” helps people clarify their priorities by considering the plusses and the minuses of eating better. Looking at both sides can help you decide if and how you would like to make any changes.



Complete your chart by writing your likes and dislikes about eating better. *Then, circle the things on your lists that are most important for you.*



What I <b>like</b> about eating better	What I <b>dislike</b> about eating better

You may still be unsure whether you are really ready to begin to eat better. That’s fine. You may find it helpful to talk this over with a friend, family member, or health professional before you make a decision.



Who can you discuss your Decisional Balance with? What are other ideas can you add to your chart?



## What Does Your Decisional Balance Mean?

You just completed your Decisional Balance, but what does it mean?

Most people are able to list reasons in both boxes of the chart. If you were able to complete both sides of the Decisional Balance, that means you have important reasons to plan to eat better, and you have reasons not to eat better. By looking at each box more closely, you will know if eating better is something that is important to you right now.

Start with your LIKES:



Looking at what you wrote on page 12, what do you **like most** about eating better? If you decide to eat better, what is the best thing that can happen in one year? (For example, if what you like most about eating better is that you would be more self-confident, then how would your life be different in one year?)

Then consider your DISLIKES:



Looking at what you wrote on page 12, what do you **dislike most** about eating better? If you decide to eat better, how might you be able to address this? (For example, if what you dislike the most about eating better is that you feel healthy food tastes boring, what are your ideas to help them taste better?)



## How is Eating Better Related to Your Overall Wellness Goal?

As you have been reading through *Eating Better*, you probably have been thinking about the many reasons *for* and *against* making changes in your life. Even after all of this thinking, you may still feel stuck about what you want to do now.

That's okay. It can take time to make a decision and carry it out. The rest of this page will help you think more specifically about whether you want to set a goal and make a plan for change.



With all of this in mind, think of your Overall Wellness Goal, the one you chose in *Wellness Your Way*, page 6.



YOU

If you were able to eat better, how would this help you reach your Overall Wellness Goal? For example, if you looked better, felt more self-confident, or felt more energized by eating better, how would that affect your ability to achieve your Overall Wellness Goal?

*I see myself in a full length mirror and I didn't like what I saw... I used to eat fast food three, four, five times a week. I've cut my starches in half and doubled my vegetables. I snack on carrots. I still have chips every now and then.*

- Person with diabetes



## Now That You've Thought about it, How Ready Are You to Eat Better?

You started this module by rating your “readiness” to eat better. Now that you’ve learned more, please rate yourself again.



On a scale of 1 to 10, with “1” meaning you are *not ready at all* and “10” meaning you are *absolutely ready*, how would you rate your “readiness” to eat better?



1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

1 = Not ready at all

10 = Absolutely ready

What are your thoughts and feelings on how ready you are to eat better based on your above rating?

### Has your rating changed?



Now that you’ve learned more about yourself, you can go to ***Doing It - Eating Better*** (page 16), or ***Tracking It – Eating Better!*** (page 28). You can also try any other module in **Your Wellness Counts**. Go to the section of this module that you think is right for you.



If you decide NOT to continue with ***Eating Better***, that’s fine. What would be some situations in which you’d be more open to the possibility in the future?



## Doing It - Eating Better



If you are still not sure whether you want to change your eating habits, the next part of ***Eating Better*** will help you consider small changes. This will help you decide what you want to do, if anything. If you have already decided to eat better, the next few pages will help you consider what steps you would like to take first. With so many options, it can be hard to know where to begin.

Remember, eating better doesn't mean that you have to avoid all the foods you enjoy. Start by making one small change—something that you believe you can realistically do.

"Don't give up before you start. Start before you give up."

Most people have already had success in eating better, even in a small way. For example, maybe you skipped dessert or ordered water when eating out instead of buying soda. These small actions show strength on your part. Look back at other strengths you have (either now or in past) around eating well.



If you changed how you ate in the past, (even if the change didn't last long), how did you make this happen? What are you most proud of?

As you think about the possibility of eating better, you will be helped by identifying and developing some optimism (hope and confidence).



What knowledge and skills that you have already have could you apply to eating better?



## Eating Better: One Small Step at a Time

We all make many food choices throughout our day—everything from how much sugar we put in our coffee, to whether we'll eat vegetables instead of chips, to what time of the day we eat most of our food.

Eating better doesn't mean that you need to change everything about your diet all at the same time. You can start by doing just *one thing* differently. This simple thing becomes your change goal. A small change might be drinking water instead of soda, alcohol, or juice at one meal per day for one month.

Once you accomplish that first goal, you can celebrate your success by rewarding yourself. Simple pleasures, like listening to a favorite song or getting a book from the library, can be a way of appreciating yourself for doing well. Then, if you want, you can work towards a new goal.

Step by step, goal by goal, these small changes will add up to significant improvements in eating better!

I can have a cup of decaf at coffee hour and just turn down the cookies. Again, it is the little things, the little choices that hopefully will add up to something more in the long run.



What are some great ideas that you have for taking small steps for eating better?



## Learn What's Worth Eating

Reading the nutrition facts label is a very key skill for eating better. These labels can appear complicated, but you can learn how to read them to help you make healthy choices at the supermarket. Here are some tips.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	

Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110

	% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	10%
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	20%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	10%

Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

To the left is a nutrition facts label for macaroni and cheese.\* Serving size can be misleading, as the size listed is often unreasonably small. Calories are per serving. Since the label on the left contains two servings, there are actually 500 calories in the entire package!

Checking the fat content can help you avoid unhealthy fats, which include saturated and trans fats. The lower the % Daily Value for unhealthy fats, the better. About 5% is low.

You can check sodium levels here as well, which is especially important if your doctor or nutritionist has mentioned the need to watch sodium intake. Fiber is a good thing and can help cut the risk of some diseases.

A healthy diet contains very little added sugar. Some foods contain natural sugar. Compare those to similar foods with added sugar.

*Example:* Plain yogurt may have about 6g (grams) of sugar, while flavored yogurt may have up to 26g of sugar!

You may also choose healthy non-prepackaged foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Also, foods with very few items on the ingredients label are often better than foods with many ingredients listed. For example, fresh chicken in the butcher-wrapped package is better than breaded chicken patties with a 17 item long ingredients list!



\*Reference:

[http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/images/img\\_tips\\_food\\_label.gif](http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/images/img_tips_food_label.gif)

Resource: <http://www.fda.gov/> (search for "nutrition facts label")



## Should I Count Calories?

Nutrition facts labels can be helpful by letting you know how many calories are in each serving of food. Many people who want to lose weight think that the only/best way to do that is to count calories.

### ● **What is a calorie?**

A calorie is a measure of how much energy your body can get from certain foods. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines (2015-2020) say that achieving weight loss usually requires reducing the calories taken in from food.

### ● **Are all calories the same?**

Many people think that all calories are the same, but this is not entirely true. Consider that while candy and mixed nuts may each have 200 calories per serving, they would not provide the same nutritional content to your body. Candy would offer primarily sugar, while the mixed nuts would offer protein and healthy fats.

### ● **How many calories does a person need?**

The information on Nutrition Facts labels are based on an intake of 2,000 calories a day. However, everyone is different! Your body may need less or more, depending on a number of things, including age, gender, activity level, recent weight loss, and your weight goal. *Consulting a nutritionist* is a great way to find out just how many calories would be best for you every day.

### ● **But counting calories can be overwhelming!**

Yes, it's true. If you don't want to keep a list of everything you eat, there are other ways to reduce calories. It can be as simple as substituting a low-calorie food for a high-calorie food. This is where food labels can come in handy. Compare canned pears:

<i>Pears in heavy syrup:</i>	200 calories per cup
<i>Pears in 100% fruit juice:</i>	120 calories per cup
<i>Pears with no sugar added:</i>	80 calories per cup

Of course, it's probably better to choose the pears than ice cream, which can add close to 275 calories for one cup!



## Finding the Right Amount to Eat

Eating better is all about making your own decisions, whether you concentrate on eating more vegetables, drinking more water, cutting calories, or choosing healthy options based on the Nutrition Facts label. Another important factor in eating better is managing your portions.



**Managing food portions** means eating a reasonable amount of food. Instead of just eating everything that is available to you, try eating a bit less of the not-so-healthy things and a bit more of healthier options. Here are some ideas for doing this:

- Use a small plate, bowl or glass to help you eat less.
- Take small bites, eat slowly, chew thoroughly, and savor the taste.
- Before getting seconds, wait 10 to 15 minutes, and then decide if you really need more.
- Stop eating when you are satisfied rather than when you feel full.
- Be aware of your mood while eating. If you feel stressed or upset, try taking a walk or a few deep breaths. If you must eat, snack on a healthy option, such as fruit or yogurt, instead of cookies or chips.
- When you order take-out, bring the food home and place it on a plate. If it seems like too much, set some aside for another time.
- Be bold and smart when eating out! Try asking for the “lunch” entree, order an appetizer only, or pack up half your meal to take home.



What are your great ideas about how you can manage portions?



Resource: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/> (search for “portion size”)



## How Can You Shop Smarter?



Making healthier food choices often begins before you sit down to eat. What you buy and what you keep in the house will affect what you eat. Choosing well at the grocery store will help you choose well at home.

Having a deliberate plan for which foods to buy can help you eat better, stay healthy, and stay within your budget.

### ***Before you shop***

- Decide how much money you can afford to spend before you go.
- Plan to buy nutritious foods that you will enjoy eating during the next week.
- Check with others who live with you about their meal plans.
- See what items you already have and what items you need to buy.
- Create a shopping list and plan to stick to it at the store.
- Before shopping, eat a healthy snack so you don't shop while hungry!

### ***While you shop***

- Check the labels on foods and drinks you're considering buying. Remember, fewer ingredients on the label is generally better.
- Limit sugar and unhealthy fats.
- Look for low sodium canned food (or rinse off the salt when preparing).
- Check for the latest expiration date to buy the freshest food.

### ***After you shop***

- Refrigerate or divide portions and freeze food quickly to preserve freshness and avoid spoiling.
- Use foods with the earliest expiration date first.

As part of your shopping make-over, look at what's in your cupboards and your refrigerator. Are there unhealthy options that you might throw out or give away?



You can make food shopping more enjoyable if you ask others to join you. How can a friend and/or family member support you in shopping smarter?



## Eating Better When Dining Out

When you eat out, it can be hard to find healthy food. Here are some ideas:

### **Before you go:**

- Check the menu online before you go out.
- Ask to see the menu before you sit down.

When I get pizza,  
I order thin crust.

### **When ordering:**

- Look for a healthy options list or menu.
- Pick food that is steamed, grilled, broiled, baked, poached or stir-fried.
- Avoid food that is fried, sautéed, breaded or battered.
- Choose a sandwich or burger *without cheese*.
- Order an appetizer-sized portion or a side dish instead of an entrée.
- Choose a “small” or “lunch” portion of food as well as drinks.
- For a drink, try water, unsweetened tea, or other drinks without added sugars.
- Choose a salad with low-fat dressing. Ask for the dressing on the side. You also might ask for oil and vinegar at the table.
- Select grilled chicken, turkey, or seafood.
- Skip dessert.



### **At specific restaurants:**

- *Chinese* - Select steamed options instead of deep fried ones.
- *Indian* – Try foods with sauces made from yogurt instead of cream.
- *Italian* – A red sauce is healthier than one with cream, butter, or cheese.
- *Mexican* – Order foods that are not fried. Skip cheese and sour cream.

### **When the server brings your food:**

- Ask for a take-out box and pack half of it to go immediately.
- Split the food with a friend instead of eating all the food yourself.
- When you’ve eaten enough, leave the rest or pack it “to go”.



YOU

Which of these ideas would you like to try next time you eat out?





## Identify Your Eating Triggers

A trigger is defined as anything that may initiate a series of behaviors. Some people have triggers that increase the likelihood that they will eat too much unhealthy food. Triggers differ for everyone, but there are some that many people have in common.

Triggers may include specific foods, feelings or situations which can contribute to you eating more than you would like. Here is a list common eating triggers. Which ones apply to you?

Foods	Feelings	Situations
<input type="radio"/> Donuts	<input type="radio"/> Anxiety	<input type="radio"/> Eating at a buffet
<input type="radio"/> Ice cream	<input type="radio"/> Loneliness	<input type="radio"/> Watching TV/a movie
<input type="radio"/> Cookies	<input type="radio"/> Depression	<input type="radio"/> Going to a bar
<input type="radio"/> Potato/corn chips	<input type="radio"/> Boredom	<input type="radio"/> Attending a party
<input type="radio"/> French fries	<input type="radio"/> Curiosity	<input type="radio"/> Not knowing what to eat
<input type="radio"/> Candy	<input type="radio"/> Anger	<input type="radio"/> Staying up at night



What eating triggers affect you the most?

For dealing with eating triggers, one effective strategy is avoidance, such as not keeping ice cream in your home or skipping the buffet. Another useful strategy is substitution, such as eating pretzels instead of potato chips, talking with a friend instead of drinking beer, keeping a bowl of fruit on the table instead of a cookie jar, or taking a walk instead of eating.



Which of your current eating triggers are you the most confident in addressing? How do you think this can happen?



## Eating Better and Alcohol

If you drink alcohol, the next few paragraphs invite you to explore how alcohol fits in with eating better and, consequently, how it may affect your Overall Wellness Goal. For people in recovery who have a mental and/or substance use disorder, **the best recommendation is to not use alcohol or illegal drugs.**



Drinking alcohol, such as beer, wine or mixed drinks, may be a part of social situations where people are eating. For example, alcohol may be available when family and friends go out to eat or celebrate a holiday together.

If you have been reading straight through ***Eating Better***, you already know that one of the best ways to be healthy is to eat a variety of nutritious foods while minimizing how many calories you take in. Alcohol can be harmful in part because, although it can be high in calories, it has almost no nutrients. It does not include proteins, vitamins, or minerals. This is why you may have heard alcohol described as being “empty calories.” In addition to providing extra calories, alcohol also interferes with how your body processes and stores the nutrients from the healthy foods that you do eat. Many people also find it harder to resist the temptation of high-calorie unhealthy foods when they have been drinking. Because of this, people who drink alcohol heavily \* or use illegal drugs\*\* may not receive enough healthy nutrients. By eating better, **you can help balance out these negative effects**, even if you continue to use alcohol or drugs.



YOU

If you drink alcohol or use drugs, how can eating better fit in with your lifestyle?



References: \* <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh27-3/220-231.htm>

\*\* <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12425731>



## Special Considerations to Eat Better for a Person in Recovery

For a person in recovery who has a mental and/or substance use disorder, there are special considerations that can help you as you plan to eat better.

- Some medications can increase your appetite. You may wish to talk to the person who prescribes your medication about your options. For example, you can ask to try another medication or decrease your dose.
- Behavioral health service providers may serve large portions of starches such as potatoes, rice, or bread. Try eating healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables first and consider not eating all that is served.
- Finding fresh fruits and vegetables can be a challenge, depending on where you live. Frozen or canned fruits and vegetables with low salt and a “no sugar added” label can be good options.
- Whole grains may cost more, but they help you eat healthier and feel fuller. Ask for or buy brown rice, or whole-wheat bread and pasta.
- Drinking coffee is *very popular* in behavioral health programs. You may wish to ask for fat-free creamer or low-fat milk while adding less sugar to your coffee and tea.
- To reduce sodium intake, you can ask for portions with no added salt.  
\*Also see ***Eating Better***, p. 18 for reading labels.
- Sugary drinks like soda and juice are often offered in programs, inpatient facilities, and vending machines. Speak up and advocate that programs offer more water in cafeterias and vending machines.



How can you overcome some of your challenges so you can eat better?



## Planning to Eat Better: Small Steps

<b>Small Steps for Eating Better</b> Check the small step(s) that will work for you.	Interest Level		
	HIGH	MED	LOW
1. Eat <b>brown</b> rice instead of white rice			
2. <b>Buy or prepare</b> popcorn with little or no added salt and butter			
3. Drink <b>water</b> instead of soda, juice or other sugary beverages			
4. Buy frozen <b>vegetables</b> for quick and easy cooking			
5. <b>Order</b> a green salad instead of french fries			
6. Order a <b>pizza slice</b> with vegetables and less cheese			
7. Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table or in the refrigerator			
8. Choose <b>fresh fruit</b> instead of sweets			
9. Include fat-free or <b>low-fat</b> milk as a beverage at meals			
10. Try fat-free or low-fat plain <b>yogurt</b> with sliced fruit			
11. Choose <b>lean</b> meats for sandwiches			
12. Buy skinless chicken or <b>remove</b> the skin off before eating			
Add your own idea(s).... *See pages 20 -25 for more options.			



Which small steps are you willing to try now?



Resource: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) (search for "ten-tips")



## Eating Better – Connecting with Your Recovery Team

1. What small steps can you take now to eat better? \*\*\*See page 26 of *Eating Better* for ideas.

2. Choose one specific step from the above list. Choose one that you will enjoy and feel confident you can do now.

3. Turn your step into a goal. Add a time frame that works for you.

By \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_.

*Date*

*Action step: What will you do? How often will you do it?*

*Example: By Oct. 16, I will eat vegetables with dinner five times each week.*

4. Talk with your recovery team about how you want to integrate your goal of eating better into your existing plans.

- Wellness Recovery Action Plan – Would you like this step to be included in your Wellness Toolbox or Daily Maintenance Plan?
- Illness Management and Recovery - How could this step help you achieve your identified Recovery Goal?
- Recovery/Treatment/Service Plan – How would you want this step to be integrated in your current services?

5. Find someone on your recovery team (or a friend or family members) to help you with this goal. Tell them what they can do to support you and help you celebrate your success.

*When you achieve one goal, you can choose another, if you want.*



## Eating Better: Tracking Your Progress



So far, you have successfully identified an Overall Wellness Goal and an Eating Better goal. Next, you will begin with some small steps to build confidence and momentum so that you can eat better. After you are successful in taking these steps, maintaining your success can help you to be in the best position to achieve your life goals.

Here are some other ideas to help you continue what you started:

- Ask someone who supports you to help you be accountable to yourself for tracking your progress.
- Consider working with someone who has a similar goal.
- Publicize your success by sharing with peers, friends, and family. Be proud of yourself! You might even want to share through social media.
- Take a picture of yourself “before (now) and after” you reach your goal.
- After completing a step or small goal, write a positive statement, such as “I enjoy making better food choices.” Write this statement on an index card or type into your smartphone.
- Your great idea to maintain success: \_\_\_\_\_

One of the best ways to stay motivated and reach your goal is to track your progress. On the next few pages, there are 3 tracking tools. You can choose any that you feel will help you achieve your goal of eating better.



- ➔ If you want a long-term measure of how eating better is affecting your health, you can try “Your BMI” on page 29.
- ➔ If you want something *simple and easy to complete*, you can try “My Growth” on page 30.
- ➔ If you want something that *helps you to recall what you are feeling and how social support can help*, you can try “My Progress” on page 31.



Resource: [www.udsa.gov](http://www.udsa.gov) (search for “food supertracker”)



## Your Body Mass Index (BMI)

As you start taking small steps to eat better, you get closer to reaching your goals. Besides noting progress towards Your **Eating Better** goal and your Overall Wellness Goal, you may want to think about other ways you can measure your success. One way to assess where you are now, and to highlight the progress you are making, is by using **Body Mass Index**.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Body Mass Index (or BMI) is an “inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight category, for example underweight, normal or healthy weight, overweight, and obesity.” If your BMI is above what is considered the normal range, the risk for some diseases increases, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis and some cancers. The higher the BMI is above normal, the higher the risk.

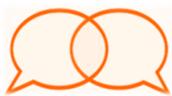


For adult men and women 20 years and older, BMI falls into one of these weight categories:

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Normal
25.0-29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

Many people are surprised to learn that their BMI may indicate that they are considered overweight or obese. Remember that you can make small steps to eat better and slowly lose weight.

Tracking your BMI can help monitor your progress. The Module “**Wellness Every Day**” contains a chart that can help you track health indicators such as BMI.



Sharing information and discussing your BMI with your doctor, nurse, counselor, or others can support your efforts to eat better and be more physically active.



Resource: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/> (search for “BMI calculator”)





## Eating Better – My Growth

The small step I will do each day is: \_\_\_\_\_

Why this small step is important: \_\_\_\_\_ 

Starting Date: _____		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Did I take my Small Step?</b>	Yes							
	Yes, partially							
	No							

This week what did I learn about eating better?

What will I do next week?





## Eating Better – My Progress

The small goal I want to try this week is: \_\_\_\_\_

Here's why: \_\_\_\_\_



Starting Date: _____		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Did I achieve my goal for eating better today?</b>	Yes							
	Yes, partially							
	No							
<b>How did I feel about achieving (or not achieving) my goal?</b>	Happy							
	Proud							
	Disappointed							
	Sad							
	Other:							
<b>Did I talk to anyone today about my goal?</b>	Yes							
	No							

**When I was successful, what was my role in making it happen? What can I do more of?**



## What Did You Learn?

- Once you learn what it means to eat better, you can make a decision about what you want to do.
- How you eat is up to you. Your choices about how, when, and what to eat can affect your health and how you feel, but it is up to you to choose what you want to do to eat better, if anything.
- There are many choices for eating better. When you are ready to make a change, taking one small step at a time can be the best way to go.
- Planning the small steps and tracking your progress can lead to success. Get the support you need.
- Celebrate your progress! Reward yourself for taking charge of your eating habits. Remind yourself of each positive small step you take.



What is the most important thing you learned from the **Eating Better** module?

Taking charge of your life and your health means continued learning.



What else do you want to learn about **Eating Better**?





# Congratulations!



You have completed the ***Eating Better*** module.

**Before moving on to the next module, use this space for any notes or reflections you have about Eating Better.**

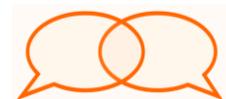


From here, move around in *any way* that supports your recovery.

➔ If you decide to continue working on healthier eating, go ahead and revisit this ***Eating Better*** module. You can also get some more information on the next few pages, “***Eating Better – Resources and References***”.



➔ If you want to revisit being more involved with your treatment, go ahead and move on to the module on ***Shared Decision Making***.



➔ If you decide that getting more physically activity is most important, take a look at the module on ***Moving More***.



➔ If you're most concerned about your smoking, see the module on ***Deciding about Smoking***.



➔ If you want to learn how to maintain and track your wellness, you can go directly to ***Wellness Every Day***.



Go to the module that you think is right for you.



## Eating Better – Resources and References



- Listed in order of topics mentioned in this module
- Reference or resource with asterisk\*= mentioned previously on page

For more general information on how you can eat better:

1. \*<http://www.choosemyplate.gov>
2. \*<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/>

To learn more about reducing your risk for diabetes and heart disease:

3. [http://professional.diabetes.org/UserFiles/File/Resources%20for%20Professionals/WYNTK\\_Eng.pdf](http://professional.diabetes.org/UserFiles/File/Resources%20for%20Professionals/WYNTK_Eng.pdf)

To learn more about discussing your medications:

4. [http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/news/publications/Sharing\\_Decisions\\_re\\_Meds\\_revised\\_2012.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/news/publications/Sharing_Decisions_re_Meds_revised_2012.pdf)

For more on Metabolic Syndrome:

5. \*[http://www.nami.org/factsheets/metabolicsyndrome\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.nami.org/factsheets/metabolicsyndrome_factsheet.pdf)
6. \*<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25528926>

How to eat better and save money at the same time:

7. \*<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html>
8. \*<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/fruit-and-vegetable-prices.aspx>

To learn more about Nutrition Facts label:

9. \*<http://www.fda.gov/food/ingredientspackaginglabeling/labelingnutrition/ucm274593.htm#see5>
10. \*[http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/images/img\\_tips\\_food\\_label.gif](http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/images/img_tips_food_label.gif)
11. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HeartSmartShopping/Reading-Food-Nutrition-Labels\\_UCM\\_300132\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HeartSmartShopping/Reading-Food-Nutrition-Labels_UCM_300132_Article.jsp)

For managing food portions:

12. \*<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000337.htm>
13. [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy\\_eating/portion\\_size.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/portion_size.html)



For smart shopping:

14. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/sites/default/files/budget/EatRightWhenMoneysTight.pdf>
15. <http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/planning-and-prep/eat-right-on-a-budget/eating-right-when-moneys-tight>

How to eat better and enjoy yourself when eating out:

16. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/eating-foods-away-home>
17. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000339.htm>
18. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/eating-out.htm>
19. [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/eat/tips\\_eth\\_dine.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/eat/tips_eth_dine.htm)

For food triggers:

19. [http://www.weightwatchers.com/util/art/index\\_art.aspx?tabnum=1&art\\_id=35441&sc=802](http://www.weightwatchers.com/util/art/index_art.aspx?tabnum=1&art_id=35441&sc=802)
20. <http://women.smokefree.gov/food-nutrition-nourish-your-body/3-food-triggers-how-to-beat-them.aspx>

To know more about drinking alcohol & nutrition:

21. \*<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh27-3/220-231.htm>
22. \*<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12425731>
23. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/alcohol/>

For specific ideas and suggestions on how you can eat healthier:

24. \*<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>

For more information on Body Mass Index:

25. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/>
26. \*[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm)

For more tools to plan and track your food (and fitness) goals:

27. <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx>

### Additional resources

- <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/>
- [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/HealthyEating\\_UCM\\_001188\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/HealthyEating_UCM_001188_SubHomePage.jsp)
- [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/eat/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/eat/index.htm)
- [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy\\_eating/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/index.html)

