



This Year's Resolution:

Eat Healthy

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January 1st is the beginning of a new year. A fresh start. Many people use this as motivation to set lofty goals focused on following a restrictive diet and/or losing weight, but the list of possible resolutions is endless. Unfortunately, many of these goals are left unmet within the first three weeks of the new year. Whether it's because the goal was set too high or there was not enough motivation, I think it's beneficial to start a new year with basic concepts of healthy eating and beginning each day as a fresh start to achieve that goal.

What are some basic, obtainable concepts of healthy eating?

Let's skip all the "complicated" tasks of calorie counting, restricting your diet, or calculating your energy expenditure and start with your plate. Yes, I really mean it, your plate. What size plate do you use for your meals? The typical dinner plate in America has increased in size over the past 60 years resulting in larger portion sizes, thus increasing the number of calories consumed. A normal dinner plate is now twelve inches. To combat this issue head on, just eat from a smaller plate! A plate that is ten inches is the perfect size. Without even realizing it, you will be eating smaller portions and less calories.

Another basic concept is to make half your plate fruits and vegetables at every meal. Yes, all three meals. I personally struggle to do this, especially at breakfast, because who wants to be eating vegetables first thing in the morning...with coffee? It took me a while to realize I didn't need to follow the rules exactly. At breakfast, half my plate is full of fruit. At lunch, half my plate is full of one fruit and one vegetable, and then finally at dinner, half my plate is full of vegetables. The more you incorporate this rule into your meals, the easier it will become. You may even start to crave fruits and vegetables. Taking this idea of fruits and vegetables a step further, variety is important. It will get awfully boring to eat the same fruit every morning or a salad at every dinner. Variety will not only make this concept sustainable long-term, but it will also allow you to consume different vitamins, minerals, and fiber. These are all important factors of a healthy diet.

Whole Grains. Do you know what a whole grain is? A whole grain contains all the essential parts and naturally occurring nutrients of the entire grain seed in their original proportions. In contrast, a refined grain contains only one essential part. This all boils down to the fact that whole grains contain more nutrients than refined grains, which brings us to the next point: half of the grains you consume should be whole grains. If you eat a refined grain for breakfast, eat a whole grain for lunch; alternate. When you eat two meals in a row with whole grains, it's your chance to go a little crazy and eat two refined grains. Just remember, don't get hung up if you don't follow this perfectly. Tomorrow is another day for you to try again, making a healthier choice.

When eating healthy, variety is important and can be applied to every food group. Within the protein food group, variety is specifically important because different types of protein offer different nutrients. Incorporating all types of protein (meat,

poultry, eggs, seafood, lentils, nuts, and seeds) into your meals allows your body to absorb important nutrients (unsaturated fats, dietary fiber, B vitamins, and iron). It also helps limit the amount of sodium and saturated fats absorbed from processed meat and poultry.

Let's talk about dairy. This is the simplest point to explain: when you have a choice, choose dairy with lower fat content, such as low-fat or fat-free. The easiest scenario for me to apply this is when I am mobile ordering Starbucks and I select the type of milk or cream I want my drink made with. I always choose the fat free option and I can never tell the difference. Another easy moment to choose fat-free dairy is yogurt. Fat-free yogurt includes so many flavor choices, I'm sure you could find at least one you would enjoy.

Last is water! Water often gets overlooked as an important part of healthy eating. This is probably because you don't eat water, you drink it. The rule of thumb with water is 8x8 a day: eight glasses of eight ounces, which equals 64 ounces daily. Water can improve physical performance, prevent and treat headaches, relieve constipation, improve energy, improve brain function, and can even aid weight loss and prevent weight gain. Drinking enough water is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Putting these concepts together to eat healthy may be overwhelming...but don't let it be. Take a step back and look at your current eating habits, choose one or two things that you can do today (right now) that is a healthier choice. As you become more confident in your healthy eating decisions, add another and another until you can maintain all six. Truth be told, to eat healthy requires constant effort but the decision will not only benefit your health now but will lead you to a healthier future.

*Check out this article "Ring in a SMART New Year" to make specific, realistic resolutions: www.childrenwithdiabetes.com/articles/ringing-in-a-smart-new-year/