

12 Weeks

TO HEALTHY EATING

WEEK FOUR – HOW TO EAT: STRUCTURE YOUR DAY FOR SUCCESS

The importance of structure and routine

Structure is important to maintain energy levels, reduce hunger and meet your nutrient needs. At one time in your life, you have probably fallen into the trap of the “all or nothing” mindset; waking up with the best of intentions to start a healthy eating plan, making it through breakfast, not eating enough in the morning, making a poor choice at lunch and giving up for the rest of the day with the intent to start again tomorrow.

Learning:

- Timing
- Scheduling
- Weekends
- 80/20 plan for long-term success

Have you ever:

- Fallen into the trap of simply going too long without eating, only to binge, make poor food choices and completely lose control the next time you eat?
- Created a great plan of sticking to a strict, healthy, low-calorie diet, which worked great until you got home from work and were sabotaged by all the temptations around you?
- Eaten healthy until the afternoon when your coworkers tempted you with candy and chocolate?
- Said, “I will start tomorrow....”

The problem is, the tomorrow you successfully start never comes and weeks have passed without any changes being made.

Have you ever thought about taking a more generous and forgiving approach? How would your plan be different if you knew this was a long-term lifestyle change instead of a short-term diet?

I am sure we have all experienced at least one of the scenarios above only to regroup and take another try at it without success.

You are not alone!

Your plan of attack

Below are some creative ideas you can use to help strengthen your resolve and come out with a lasting, healthy lifestyle plan.

Here are 10 helpful tips to structure your day for success.

1. Realistic mindset and goals

A proper mindset is an asset to creating successful change. One common trait of successful people is they are goal oriented, know what they want and know what they need to do to get there. Take some time to establish your goals and to write them down. Goals must be realistic in order to achieve feelings of success. Writing down Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-specific goals (SMART) will help to increase your motivation and confidence toward getting the results you envisioned. When you accomplish a goal, reward yourself and establish a new goal to work toward. Avoid the all or nothing approach.

My goal is to.....

Identify any obstacles and patterns that have got in the way of your success.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Being realistic, how might you challenge these obstacles to increase your chances of success?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Quick fact:

Maintain a realistic approach by creating a plan that includes an 80/20 approach. This rule suggests that 80% of the time you are eating in a way that is healthy and 20% of the time you are giving yourself permission to consume foods you know might not be as healthy. This is a more realistic approach toward lifestyle change that is sustainable. An all or none approach does not contribute to long-term sustainable change.

2. Planning ahead

Writing down a weekly plan can help prevent slip-ups. By planning ahead and acting on the plan you have created, you significantly increase your chances of success. Being prepared is an effective practice associated with living a successful, healthy eating life.

Action: Create a calendar of what you will be having for the week; include breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with several snack ideas. If you are computer savvy, put these meal ideas into a spreadsheet and enter five new recipes per month to create variety in your plan.

3. Grocery shopping

After you have your plan in place for the week—including all of the items you will need to make those meals and snacks—head to the store. Stock your kitchen with all of the essentials you need to put your plan into action. Aim to shop once per week to save time with one larger grocery shopping trip per month to replace basic essentials. Stock up on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, eggs, fish, meat, beans, nuts, seeds and dairy (see stocking your kitchen).

My weekly grocery list:

4. Wash, chop and pack

An obstacle to buying fresh produce is the time it takes to prepare. Overcome that barrier by washing and chopping all of your fresh fruits and vegetables immediately when you get home from the grocery store. Make a large salad for dinners, slice peppers to be used for snacks or stir-fries or chop broccoli to be steamed for a dinner. Pack up individual sandwich bags or small containers with snack-size amounts to grab and go! Wash and dry lettuce pieces to put on sandwiches for the week. Taking care of the preparation now means the only thing you have to do is eat them or cook and eat them!

5. Cook in bulk

Double or triple the recipe for soups, stews, pot pies, meatloaves, lasagnas and casseroles, and freeze the leftovers in individual containers for lunches and dinners when you are in a bind. Take one serving out the night before to allow time to defrost and you are on your way to a healthy, home-cooked meal!

Don't have time to cook every night? Meat and whole grains can take longer to cook and can steer you away from incorporating them into your healthy eating plan. Overcome this barrier by cooking extra whole grains, such as quinoa, brown rice or barley, and meat, such as chicken, pork, turkey, bison or other lean meats, when you have the time. Tip: If you cook in bulk on Sunday, you will be set for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Cook in bulk again on Wednesday and save time on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Time-saving tips

- Sunday: Grill several chicken breasts, soak and boil a pot of black beans and prepare a large batch of whole grain rice.
- Sunday night: Chicken tacos with rice, chicken, salsa, cheese, avocado, whole grain taco shells and lettuce, or go vegetarian and substitute chicken for black beans.
- Monday lunch: Mexican salad with leftover taco ingredients.
- Monday dinner: Chicken teriyaki stir-fry with brown rice and an abundance of vegetables.
- Tuesday lunch: Chicken sandwich on whole grain bread.
- Tuesday dinner: Black bean, rice and vegetable soup.
- Wednesday lunch: Leftovers from Monday night stir-fry dinner.
- Choose one to two more protein items and a whole grain to cook on Wednesday night!

6. Healthy meals and snacks every two to four hours

Small frequent meals throughout the day will help you maintain control over your appetite, increase energy levels, establish and maintain a healthy weight and even allow you to better meet your nutrient needs for the day. Eating more frequently allows the body to digest, absorb and utilize the energy you consume more efficiently. Energy from small meals and snacks will be used in between meals; however, consuming excess calories at one sitting or in the form of one or two large meals per day forces your body to store excess energy as body fat.

Action: Spread your recommended food intake evenly throughout the day with an emphasis on eating more during the day and less at night, when you are less likely to need the excess energy.

- On a scale of 1–10 in terms of hunger, you should never let yourself get over a 6. If you allow yourself to get too hungry, you will likely make poor food choices, binge and not be able to sense fullness the next time you eat.
- Maintain that appetite control by eating frequently!

7. Two food groups per snack and three to four food groups per meal

Mix and match food groups to consume carbohydrates, protein and a small amount of fat at each meal.

- Carbohydrates are digested and absorbed relatively quickly, leaving you feeling hungry sooner. Complex carbohydrates with fibre take a bit longer to digest, and the fibre allows for a sustained energy release into your blood stream.
- Protein takes longer to digest and absorb and can help promote satiety (the feeling of fullness).
- Healthy fat is essential in very small amounts throughout the day.

Quick fact:

To help you stay fuller for longer, choose moderate amounts of complex carbohydrates with a small portion of lean protein and a small amount of healthy fat. Mixing and matching will also help you meet your nutrient and fibre needs!

8. Eat breakfast

Kick start your metabolism and start your day off right by eating breakfast like a king! By eating a healthy breakfast first thing in the morning, you will actually start your metabolism, your calorie burning machine.

Quick facts:

- Aim to eat breakfast within the first 30 to 60 minutes after waking up.
- Eat breakfast at home to avoid pitfalls of not preparing a breakfast on the go or not having time to consume breakfast at work.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Skipping breakfast can cause you to crave additional calories at night.
- Consuming a consistent breakfast will actually help you to maintain control of your blood sugars and appetite.
- Aim to include whole grains, calcium and vitamin D rich milk or milk alternative products and fruits or vegetables.

9. Portion control-eat until you are satisfied not full

Measure out the correct portion sizes and number of servings before you start eating. Maintaining structure in terms of lunch and snacks during the work week is an excellent way to focus on portion control. Measure your lunches and snacks and only take with you to work what you are going to eat that day. Storing extra food at work or snacks in your desk drawer can tempt you to eat more than you need.

Quick facts:

- Whether you are at work or home, avoid eating out of bulk bags and place the properly measured snack on a plate or in a bowl. You will learn to be more aware of what you are consuming if you can visualize the portion size on your plate.
- Learn to eat until you are satisfied, not until you are full. On a scale of 1–10 in terms of fullness, you should eat until you are about 5–6.

10. Eat slowly: Follow the 20-minute Rule

When was the last time you took 20 minutes to eat your meal? By that time you have already consumed your second portion. Portion out the recommended servings on your plate. Eat slowly and mindfully paying close attention to flavours and textures.

Try putting your fork down in between each bite.

Time yourself; take 20 minutes to eat your meal or wait at least 20 minutes to assess your TRUE hunger before you go back for more. How is true hunger defined? The growling feeling you get is the true way to assess hunger.

Quick facts:

- To assess your true hunger, ask yourself, could I go eat an apple or a cup of broccoli right now? If you would rather reach for other unhealthy choices you probably aren't truly hungry.
- Your brain takes 20 minutes to sense fullness in your stomach.

Self-exploration exercises:

Complete the table below. Create a schedule to set yourself up for success. Incorporate the tips listed above that you feel are important for your success.

For example, one or more of the following might be important to you: eating every two to four hours, eating breakfast, consuming at least three food groups per meal and two food groups per snack or allowing at least two hours to digest your food after breakfast.

Schedule	Time	Food Group Servings
Wake up		
Breakfast		
Snack		
Lunch		
Snack		
Dinner		
Optional snack if hungry		

Example schedule with portion size distribution

Schedule	Time	Food Group Servings
Wake up	6:00 am	
Breakfast	6:30 am	2 grains, 1 milk alternative, 2 fruits or vegetables
Snack	9:30 am	1 fruit + ½ milk/milk alternative
Lunch	12:30 pm	2 grains, 1 meat/meat alternative, 2–3 vegetables
Snack	3:30 pm	1 vegetable + ½ milk/milk alternative
Dinner	6:30 pm	2 grains, 1 meat/meat alternative, 2–3 vegetables
Optional snack if hungry		

Goal setting: Set SMART goals to work on for the next week

A key point to any successful plan is to complete and review your goals on an ongoing basis. Complete the following goals sheet based on the information this chapter covered. Put pen to paper to determine what changes you need to make to ensure that you have adequate nutrients from all food groups to create a healthy diet. Focus on what you believe you need to change to improve things in this area. Identify your needs, obstacles, challenges and back- up plan to create long-term positive change.

What have you learned that is important to your lifestyle?

Based on the tips provided above, what do you feel is most important to incorporate into your healthy eating plan?

What might you change?

How might you incorporate this tip?

When might you start to incorporate this?
