Eating Habits for Life

Read this handout to learn more about how to improve your eating habits with these eight easy tips:

1. **Eat meals together.** Sharing meals is one of the best ways to spend time with family and friends.

2. **Eat most food in one location.** Eat your meals and snacks in the same place, like at the kitchen table. This helps you pay more attention to what you are eating. Try not to watch TV or use your phone so you can enjoy your food and relax.

3. **Eat breakfast.** Eating breakfast gives your body energy to start the day. Breakfast skippers may have a dip in energy earlier in the day and a rollercoaster of hunger in the afternoon to evening hours. Eating breakfast helps you feel energized all day.

4. **Drink water or unsweetened beverages.** Try to make water, the main drink you have during the day. You can also have low-fat milk with your meals. Try to stay away from sugary drinks like soda, fruit juice, and flavored coffee. These drinks add extra calories. They don't make you feel full and have few nutrients.

5. **Have a protein source at each meal.** Protein makes your muscles and bones strong. It also keeps you feeling full for a longer time. Try to eat lean protein like fish, chicken, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and eggs.

6. **Balance meals and snacks.** A simple way to balance your food is the "plate method":
   - **¼ of plate:** lean protein (like chicken, fish, tuna)
   - **¼ of plate:** whole grains or starchy vegetables
   - **½ of plate:** non-starchy vegetables
   - Add fruit on the side

7. **Choose real foods more often.** Pick foods that are closer to the farm than the factory. Choose colorful fruits and vegetables over fruit snacks or veggie chips. Choose items like whole grains bread, brown rice, oatmeal, and whole grain pasta over refined grains or sugary cereals. Try to choose healthy fats such as olive or avocado oil.

8. **Keep healthy snacks on hand.** Some examples include fruit, nuts, raw vegetables, low-fat yogurt, string cheese, or boiled eggs. Snack only if you are hungry. If you aren't hungry, try drinking some water instead. Having fewer sweets and salty snacks at home can help you avoid eating when you're not hungry.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#276