

5 Top tips for healthy eating

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By Teresa Cutter - The Healthy Chef

While most of us have the best of intentions to get healthy, it is a lifestyle you need to adopt for the rest of your life – not just a few months of juice cleanses or even giving up sugar!

One reason why many people crumble at their goal to lose weight is because they change everything too quickly, rather than focusing on making gradual small changes every week until it becomes a habit.

The key is to keep it simple and make it yourself. Eat when you're hungry, not when the clock tells you to. I try to eat according to how my body feels, my health, my activity level and what's in season.

Better health starts in the kitchen. By making simple changes to the ingredients you choose, the way you cook them and your portion size, you can improve your wellbeing.

Teresa's top five tips for healthy eating:

1. Increase vegetables and leafy salads

Cut out refined carbohydrates and replace them with vegetables and leafy greens. Vegetables and salads are loaded with vitamins and minerals as well as provide antioxidants that may prevent a number of diseases, including cancer and heart disease. Eat them every day at every meal. I love having leafy salads for lunch and drizzle simply with extra virgin olive oil and a little aged balsamic. I top with quality protein such as tinned tuna, organic eggs or roasted almonds and seeds that helps keep me satisfied.

2. Drink water

Make sure you're drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day to keep your body hydrated

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and energized throughout the day. Drinking water will also detoxify and stimulate peristalsis in the gut that will help you flush out toxins and waste. Water is vital for life and for all metabolic processes in the body. Try drinking two glasses of water before each meal – it will prime your body for fat loss and stops you from retaining excess water.

3. Ensure you are eating enough protein

Protein is essential for our bodies. It's needed for balancing hormones, assisting in weight loss, supporting detoxification and digestion, and supporting a healthy immune system. Protein can also work effectively to regulate the appetite, increase satiety and encourage significant weight loss. When attempting to keep total calories down during dieting, protein supplementation can help to keep total food volume down but still provide support directly to the muscles, liver and immune system, which are critical to optimising body composition. For weight loss, it is recommended you get between 80 – 120g of protein per day to aid satiety and repair. My favourite sources of protein are fish and game meats that have a higher ratio of omega 3 fats, needed for cardiovascular and cognitive health. For a vegetarian option of protein I love organic eggs, nuts, seeds or a whole food protein powder. I love cooking steamed salmon with asparagus or making a delicious power smoothie for breakfast using almond milk, frozen berries and a scoop of protein powder.

4. Choose extra virgin olive oil

Cold Pressed Extra Virgin Olive Oil is a delicious anti-inflammatory fat synonymous with the Mediterranean diet. This is my number-one favourite and I use it liberally in all types of cooking. This oil is beautiful-tasting, velvety and teeming with health benefits: it's a rich source of antioxidants and mono-unsaturated fatty acids – one of the main reasons why a traditional Mediterranean diet is wonderful for heart health is due to this oil's prevalence. Olive oil has some unique qualities that make it stable under cooking conditions, and provided you're buying high-quality olive oil to begin with, you can sauté to your heart's content. Cold-pressed olive oil is also a wonderful base for fresh homemade salad dressings or delicious on its own drizzled over vegetables and leafy salads.

5. Eat at home more often

Stats show that people who don't cook at home tend to eat less healthy food and be heavier than people who do. In fact, experts argue that the collapse of cooking in society correlates very closely with the rise in obesity levels. The often-delivered excuse for people not cooking is that they 'don't have the time', but the best recipes are often the easiest and quickest to make. Try out a new ingredient or recipe each week to add to your repertoire and stay away from preprepared food that is often high in sodium, sugar and trans fats.

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