

Track Your Eating Habits



CHALLENGE

Keep a record of your food choices for a month

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Track Your Eating Habits."
2. To complete this Challenge, keep a record your food choices on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep records of your completed challenge, in case your organization requires documentation.



Ohio resident Jeff Gilbert knew weighing 274 pounds was a problem. So he tried to hide it. He didn't like looking in the mirror, and he was unhappy. He knew he needed to make a change, but he didn't have

the motivation to take action. Instead, he just kept on making poor food choices, overeating, and living a sedentary lifestyle. And then something happened.

He went to the doctor for a routine exam. And when he went to pay his bill, a French fry fell out of his wallet. It was the sign he needed to do something about his weight and improve his health.

After some trial and error, Gilbert discovered a mobile app created to help people make better food and lifestyle choices. The Lose It! App won the U.S. Surgeon General's office Healthy App Challenge in 2012.¹

He started counting calories. He paid more attention to his food choices. He even started running. Within a few years, he lost 90-plus pounds and finished five marathons.

"I tell people that losing weight without tracking your food and exercise is kind of like trying to manage a bank account without ever looking at your balance," says Gilbert. "It's really difficult to do."

How much do you really know about your eating habits? Take the Healthy Eating Quiz to find out.

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1. I know how many calories I consume each day.
2. I eat 2 to 3 cups of fruits and vegetables daily.
3. I eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.
4. I always drink 48 to 60 ounces of water daily.
5. I know how many calories I burn each day.

If you answered **No** to any of these statements, you could benefit from keeping a food diary. When you know what you're eating, you can make adjustments in your diet that can help you lose or maintain weight, reduce your risk for chronic diseases, and improve your health.



Can you remember what you ate for breakfast, lunch, and dinner yesterday? And what about the snacks you had in between meals? Do you really know what you're eating, how much, and how often?

If you want to lose weight, maintain a healthy weight, or improve your diet, take the month-long health challenge to Track Your Eating Habits.

Be Mindful of Your Eating Habits

Want to know how to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight? Or just make better food choices?

Be mindful of your eating habits. A recent study found that keeping a food diary can help you improve your diet, health, and lifestyle.⁴

In the study, researchers followed 1,700 overweight and obese adults for 20 weeks. People in the study were asked to follow a healthy eating plan, exercise, and keep track of their food choices. Some did, and some didn't.

The people who kept a daily record of their food choices showed greater health improvements than those who didn't. Why? We tend to underestimate the amount of food we eat each day. We sometimes ignore factors that might trigger overeating. And we might overestimate how healthy our diet really is. Tracking your eating habits can help you be more mindful of your food choices.

How to Record Your Diet Daily

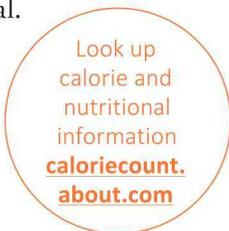
Use a paper notebook, web-based program, or mobile app to keep track of your daily diet.⁵ Or develop your own system. It's important that you choose a method to record your daily diet that works for you.

- Keep a record of all the food you eat** and drink for meals and snacks.
- Include the location and time of day** with each entry to help you identify specific eating patterns.
- Be honest.** You may not want to include a dessert high in calories in your food diary. But listing everything you eat is the only way to see what you're doing right and what you can improve on.

Count Your Calories

Everyone's calorie needs are different. Men usually need more calories than women do. And everyone needs fewer calories as they age. Use a calorie calculator, such as this one (<http://tinyurl.com/drcua>), to help you find your calorie goal.

Counting calories is another way to help you be mindful of your food choices.



Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 Bag (152g)	
Serving Per Container 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	350
	Calories from Fat 45
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat	5g
Saturated Fat	0.5g
Trans Fat	0g

These ramen noodles have 350 calories per serving, but there are 3 servings per package.

What are you eating?

- Read food labels to find out.**⁶ Most packaged food labels include the number of calories in each serving. (And make a note of how much they list as a serving. It's often a lot less than you think it is!) The food label will also give you useful information about serving size and nutrients.
- Look for calorie information at restaurants.** What you learn might surprise you. A typical fast-food hamburger contains about 600 calories. A 16-ounce soft drink contains about 185 calories. And a serving of French fries can add another 350 calories to your meal if you eat out.

Take a Closer Look at Your Eating Habits

One you've kept at least a week of entries about your eating habits, take a closer look at what you've been doing. This helps you see what you're doing right, and where you can improve. Here's how you can do this:

- Total your daily calories.** Then see if it matches up with what you should consume to maintain your weight or drop a few pounds.

- Compare your diet with healthy eating plans** like the **Harvard Healthy Eating Plate** or **ChooseMyPlate.gov**. Maybe you need to eat more fruits and vegetables. Or maybe you could benefit from eating more healthy proteins like fish, beans, and nuts.
- Look for eating patterns.** You might discover that you skip breakfast frequently, or eat too many snacks at night. Use this information to improve your diet.
- Share your food diary findings.** Talk to a friend or co-worker about your diet. Or meet with your doctor or nutritionist to review your food journal. This practice can help you be more accountable for what you eat.

Set a Goal

After you've made the effort to take an honest look at your diet for a month, set a goal to improve, lose weight, or eat healthier. And keep track of your progress. Your food diary will become a tool that can help you change your life.

Choose a food diary

Paper – Daily Food and Activity Diary:

<http://tinyurl.com/hcylldfo>

Web-based – USDA SuperTracker:

<http://www.supertracker.usda.gov>

Mobile app – Lose It!:

<https://www.loseit.com>

Many food diaries are available in print, online, and for mobile devices. Start with the log on the next page.

References

- Office of the Surgeon General. (2012, February 17). Surgeon General announces winners of the Healthy App Challenge. Accessed on December 19, 2016 from <http://tinyurl.com/h65s9gm>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Obesity and overweight. Accessed on December 19, 2016 from <http://tinyurl.com/h3wdjc7>.
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- Hollis, J., et al. (2008). Weight loss during the intensive intervention phase of the weight-loss maintenance trial. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 35(2):118-126. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2008.04.013.
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- Mandal, B. (2010). Use of food labels as a weight loss behavior. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 44(3):516-527. doi:10.1111/j.1745-6606.2010.01181.x.



Food Diary (Choose the best Eating Plan for you.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Plan A 1,400 cal (inactive women) <input type="checkbox"/> Plan C 2,000 cal (active men)	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan B 1,600 cal (active women, inactive men) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	Week of _____ Fat g/day goal _____	Starting weight _____ Ending weight _____
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Food Group Calories & Fat gms/serv (avg.)	Fruits 70 cal. 0 g fat	Vege- tables 30 cal. 0-1 g fat	Bread/ grains 80 cal. 1-3 g fat	Milk/dairy 125 cal. 0-8 g fat	Protein foods 225 cal. 2-15 g fat	Fat foods 35 cal./tsp 3-4 g fat	Sweets 100 cal. 2-10 g fat	Fat grams - total for meal
Servings per day								
Breakfast								
Lunch								
Dinner								
Snacks								
TOTALS								
Breakfast								
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<input type="checkbox"/> # of days this week I met eating goals	<input type="checkbox"/> # of days this week I met fat gram goals
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Weekly Progress - Number of days this week I followed eating plan (didn't exceed # of servings or grams of fat recommended for the day).

Track Your Eating Habits



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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you keep a food diary.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you kept a record of your food choices. To complete the Challenge, you must meet the goal on at least 22 days out of the month.
4. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [] ex. min. _____							
HC [] ex. min. _____							
HC [] ex. min. _____							
HC [] ex. min. _____							
HC [] ex. min. _____							

_____ Number of days this month I kept a food diary

_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____