



## Keep a Food Journal

### CHALLENGE

Track your eating habits for 30 days

### Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Keep a Food Journal.”
2. Track your eating habits for 30 days.
3. Keep a record of your completed health 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 and wasn't active.

And then something happened...

He went to the doctor for a routine exam. When he went to pay his bill, a French fry fell out of his wallet. That was his sign from the universe it was time to make a change.

His next move...Gilbert decided to use the LoseIt! app endorsed by the U.S. Surgeon General's Office to keep track of what he was eating.<sup>1</sup>

He started counting calories.

He paid more attention to his food choices.

His diet and exercise habits changed.

Within a couple years, he lost 90 pounds and finished five marathons

### Take the Daily Diet Quiz

How much do you really know about your eating habits?



#### Y N

1.   I know how many calories I eat/drink each day.
2.   I know how many calories I burn from physical activity each day.
3.   I always drink at least 64 ounces of water per day.
4.   I eat 1.5 to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day.
5.   I eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.

How did you do? If you answered 'No' to any of these statements, you could benefit from keeping a food journal. 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 disease, and improve your health..

“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.”

Here's a simple question: What did you have for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks yesterday? Can't remember? You're not alone. If you want to improve your health and your diet, take the month-long health challenge to Keep a Food Journal.

Calories on the menu  
<https://tinyurl.com/3phv9mxm>



## Keep Track: 5 Tips to Help You Make Better Food Choices

So how do you keep track of what you eat? Choose a format that works for you. Research shows mobile apps work well for most people.<sup>3</sup> But a paper journal or notebook works, too.

Here are five tips to help you track your food choices to improve your diet.

### 1 Keep Track...But Don't Change Anything Yet

Keep track of all the food you eat and drink for meals and snacks.

Include time and date with each entry to help you identify specific eating patterns.

Be honest. Dessert, alcohol, second or third servings all count.

### 2 Count Your Calories

Apps make this easy and track calories for you. Everyone's calories needs are different. Men usually need more calories than women. And everyone needs fewer calories as they age.

Use a calorie calculator like (My Plate: <https://tinyurl.com/rd4tn7ae>) to help you find your daily calorie goal.

### 3 Pay Attention to What You're Eating

Read food labels to find out. Most packaged food labels include the number of calories. Pay attention to serving size...it might be less than you think.

Restaurant calories. Check the menu before you order. A typical fast-food meal (burger, fries, and soda) contains 1,000-plus calories.

### 4 Evaluate Your Eating Habits

Once 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 well, and where you can improve.

Total your daily calories, and make some changes if you need to.

Follow a healthy eating plan. Most of your food should come from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, and legumes. If you eat meat or dairy, go with fish, skinless poultry, and non-fat options.

Share your results with someone you trust. Or review your foods choices with your doctor or nutritionist. It's a smart way to help you be more accountable.

### 5 Set a Goal

Keep a food journal for a least a week. Track everything. Then set a goal to improve, lose weight or eat healthier.

**Choose a food diary**  
**Paper:**  
 Daily Food and Activity: <http://tinyurl.com/hcylldfo>  
**Web-based:**  
 My Plate Meal Template: <https://tinyurl.com/2d2cjhvn>  
**Mobile app:**  
 Lose It!: [www.loseit.com](http://www.loseit.com)

## Train Your Brain to Make Better Food Choices



Eat this, not that. Have more fruits and veggies. Drink more water. You've heard the advice before. But are you doing it? If you're not, keeping track of what you eat can help.

In a recent Duke University study, researchers followed a group of 105 overweight people for 6 months.<sup>2</sup> One group measured their weight every day. Another group tracked everything they ate. And a third group tracked both.

On average, everyone lost weight. But the group that track their weight AND food choices lost the most weight (about 7 pounds), and kept it off.

"We have very strong evidence that consistent tracking — particularly of diet, but also one's weight — is an essential element of successful weight loss," says lead researcher Dr. Gery Bennett. "Consumers should look for apps that make it easy for them to track on a consistent basis.

How to read food labels  
<https://tinyurl.com/9x42pf5>

## References

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- Patel, M., et al. (2019). Comparing self-monitoring strategies for weight loss in a smartphone app: Randomized controlled trial. *uHealth* 7:2. From: <https://tinyurl.com/3a3tfd3>
- Mateo, G.F., et al. (2015). Mobile phone apps promote weight loss and increase physical activity: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 17(11): e253. From: <https://tinyurl.com/zuu5678c>



# Keep a Food Journal

## CHALLENGE

Track your eating habits for 30 days

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Track your eating habits for 30 days with a mobile app, notebook or journal.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions to keep track of what you eat and make healthier food choices.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. 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. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I tracked my eating habits  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_