Ten Ways for Optimizing Heart Health and Weight Loss
Through What and How You Eat

Make small changes that will fit into your day, changes that you can envision you will keep, and not forget in a short time. Decide on one or two changes. Make them habits. Then, focus on other changes to help you have a heart healthy diet and lose weight.

1) Focus on the pleasures of eating a healthy diet—more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, small portions of lean meat and poultry, fish several times a week, nuts, beans and legumes, and healthy fats such as olive and canola oils. If you pay attention to how you feel when you eat these foods, you will notice that eating them makes you feel wonderful (if you do not overeat). In contrast, how does it feel to have heavy meals with fried foods and high fat foods? Pay attention to the mouth feel of high fat foods. Is this a pleasant experience?

2) Focusing on the pleasures of eating means that you need to be mindful. When you are mindful and eat when you are hungry and stop when you are “just” full, you will eat just the right amount of food for you. In other words, “not” eating mindfully is a way of adding a lot of calories that you do not need. This is why learning to eat intuitively is really important.

3) How does it feel to be hungry? Do you eat when you notice that feeling of hunger or do you wait so that you are over-hungry before you start eating, and then overeat?

4) How does it feel to be full? Are there different degrees of fullness? Are you eating so quickly that you notice your fullness “after” you stop eating? Slow down, and savor your food. Appreciate that the feeling of being hungry is a wonderful feeling. It means that your body is telling you that it is time to eat.

5) Set up your environment to enable you to be mindful: eat at the table, do not watch television, don’t eat while standing in the kitchen or talking on the phone. Before you start eating—take a deep breath and relax—you are about to enjoy some taste treats.

6) To help you be more mindful, you can always keep a journal. Write down what you eat and when. Just the act of writing down what you eat will make you aware of any mindless eating you are doing. Be sure you are having regular meals starting with breakfast. Eating breakfast helps curb temptations for the rest of the day as brain scans show that skipping breakfast makes fatty, high calorie foods appear more attractive later in the day. Are there some times of the day when you are more apt to snack? Snacks, healthful ones, keep you from being over-hungry when it is meal time.

7) Now, what about what you eat? Eating high fiber, high water foods that are packed with nutrients add volume to your meals. Researcher Barbara Rolls, Ph.D.
says that we eat the same volume of food every day. If that volume is filled with low calorie foods instead of high calorie, very dense foods, we will eat less calories……….and more healthful foods. Examples of high fiber, high water foods are fruits and vegetables and whole grains. These foods are packed with nutrients to help you be as healthy as you can be.

8) To cut your portions of all foods, use a smaller plate than the one you are using now. Plates have become larger over the years, and we eat more from large plates then smaller ones. Try filling half of your dinner plate with vegetables, ¼ of the plate for a whole grain, and ¼ of the plate for a source of lean meat, poultry or fish. Finish with a fresh fruit. To avoid seconds, keep your hot food on the stove.

9) Limit your liquid calories. Keep juices to a small glass for breakfast. Are you drinking larger glasses of juice or soda? These liquid calories will be added onto the calories you are already eating for the day. In other words, if the calories in juices or sodas were from solids, you would diminish your eating by the calories in those foods. What about alcohol? These drinks can add extra pounds too. What can one do? Ask for seltzer instead of tonic, mix seltzer water with white wine or rose for a spritzer, and/or choose low-carbohydrate drinks like Champagne and other sparkling wines.

10) Are there certain foods that should be off-limits? Eating well should be eating those foods you love. Avoid those powerful feelings of deprivation. Feeling deprived will only make you want that food more. If you have a sweet tooth, try attaching a small portion of a desert to the end of your meal. You are no longer hungry, so a small portion can be very satisfying and keep you from binging later on. Eat that sweet in a very focused manner, tasting, and savoring each small bite. Remember that the first bite has the most flavor, the second bite less flavor than the first, the third bite has less flavor than the second, etc. It will not take many bites to feel truly satisfied.

What specific changes will you make in your eating to eat in a more healthful way and to reduce the calories you are eating?

1.

2.

When will you start these changes? And you envision these changes becoming part of your daily eating?

A GOAL WITHOUT A PLAN IS JUST A WISH
Antoine de Saint Exupery

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