

MARCH 2021:  
HEALTH COACHING HINTS



# EATING HEALTHY MADE SIMPLE

Does healthy eating seem daunting? Too much work, planning and time in the kitchen? Not so! Read Erika's new hints on how easy it can be!

## **Health Coaching Hint #1: Meal Planning Made Simple**

Making the transition to eating more whole foods can seem daunting since it requires spending more time in the kitchen. For many, this is a huge barrier to reducing or eliminating highly processed and fast foods from our lives.

Today I will share with you three methods you can use to reduce this barrier and make the transition to eating whole, minimally processed foods easy.

### **#1 - LEFTOVERS ARE YOUR FRIEND**

One of the easiest ways to reduce the amount of time you spend in the kitchen is to make leftovers every time you cook. This could mean you will need to at least double any recipe you make depending on how many people you will be cooking for and how many meals you'll want to cover with the extra food.

Leftovers work great for lunch the next day or even a quick dinner when you know you won't have time to cook or you're tired after a long day and don't feel like cooking.

### **#2 - MIX AND MATCH WITH A SINGLE PROTEIN**

Craving a bit more variety throughout the week. A simple way to do this is cook up a large amount of one or two proteins and then mix and match them over the week. You could pick your favorite poultry, some grass-fed ground beef, or even a selection of beans or legumes.

The idea here is to have them ready to eat or re-heat for multiple meals throughout the week. Be sure to pair with a variety of vegetables and don't be afraid to mix up the flavors.

An example I enjoy is to make a large batch of taco meat and use it in a scramble for breakfast, on a salad for lunch, and then as tacos for dinner.

### **#3 - DEDICATED PREP TIME**

You may find that it's easier to dedicate an afternoon once a week to pre-make all your meals. This can be very effective in bringing the ease of grab-and-go to the week, especially for those of us with busy schedules.

Make it fun by getting the whole family involved or make it a party with friends. While the latter may need to be virtual for the foreseeable future, you can still share in the cost of groceries and create variety throughout your week by making and sharing meals with each other.

## **Health Coaching Hint #2: Navigating the Grocery Store**

Beyond food, one of the most impactful lifestyle behaviors to influence your heart health is getting an aWhen moving away from eating processed foods and more nutrient-dense whole foods, there are two main rules when grocery shopping:

### **RULE #1. STICK TO THE OUTER EDGES.**

Fresh, minimally processed foods will be located along the outer walls of the store where it's easy to connect to power for refrigeration and plumbing for the sprinklers used to keep produce hydrated.

The exception to this is the freezer section. Minimally processed foods that are frozen can be a great way to get larger quantities of foods to minimize the number of trips to the store you need to make each week. To know if what you are buying is minimally processed, see Rule #2.

### **RULE #2. READ FOOD LABELS.**

The key is to look for foods that have the least amount of ingredients listed (typically no more than one or two) and the main ingredient is the food you are purchasing (not sugar or other additives).

Additionally, if you don't know what an ingredient is or you can't pronounce it, then you likely don't want to eat it. The goal here is to avoid excessive exposure to unnecessary salt, sweeteners, fat, artificial colors and flavors, and preservatives.

## **Health Coaching Hint #3: Tips for Finding New Recipes**

It can seem like a good idea to stick to just a few recipes as you make the transition towards eating more whole foods. The downside to this is many find it gets boring over time and can lead to reverting back to old eating habits.

To help you stick with your new, healthier way of eating, follow these tips for finding new recipes to add to your favorites collection:

### **#1 - ADD THEM GRADUALLY**

If you already have a few favorites, find ways to mix them up. Use different proteins, switch up the herbs and spices, or try them with different sides or vegetables. This is a great way to increase diversity to what you are eating and to change up the flavors so they don't become boring. Sometimes a new recipe can seem intimidating, but with repetition it can become an easy, go-to option for your household.

Feeling the need to add in even more diversity? I suggest you do this one at a time. By adding in one new recipe over a few weeks, you can decrease the overwhelming aspect of needing to make a complete dietary change all at once. Do it at a pace that works for you and keeps you interested in the process.

### **#2 - USE THESE KEYWORDS**

Sometimes we want to convert an old family recipe into a more healthy option or we have a favorite meal that needs an upgrade in ingredients. To do this, try adding these keywords to your internet search:

- VEGAN, VEGETARIAN - to avoid certain food allergies and increase diversity of protein sources
- AUTOIMMUNE PROTOCOL (AIP), WHOLE30 - to avoid the majority of foods that can cause sensitivities or increase inflammation
- GLUTEN-FREE, DAIRY-FREE, SUGAR-FREE - for specific food sensitivities or intolerances

### **#3 - WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, ASK A FRIEND**

It can be fun to see what recipes your friends or family are using on a regular basis. Coordinating a recipe swap can be a fun way to not only increase your recipe collection but strengthen your social connections.

## **Health Coaching Hint #4: Get Curious About Your Cravings**

Most of us have struggled with a food craving at one point or another. What you may not realize is these cravings can provide a lot of insight into how you are doing physically and mentally. The next time you have a craving, ask yourself these questions:

### **AM I THIRSTY?**

Thirst can often be confused with hunger. Before giving into your craving, try drinking a glass of water and waiting a few minutes to see if it goes away.

### **HAVE I EATEN ENOUGH PROTEIN OR HEALTHY FATS TODAY?**

If you predominantly eat a carb rich diet (this includes a focus on fruit, vegetables, and whole grains) you may find you get hungry more often. If you add more protein and healthy fats to your meals, you will be providing your body with a source of energy that can last longer, making you less hungry between meals.

### **AM I BORED?**

Boredom is one of the biggest contributors to eating when we aren't actually hungry. If you find yourself craving food, try doing something different for a few minutes like taking a walk or playing with your kids or pets to shift your mind onto something else. There's a good chance you'll find your craving will disappear by the time you are done.

### **AM I TIRED?**

If you aren't getting enough sleep, you may find yourself craving certain foods. This is your body's way of trying to get more energy to keep going at the level you are trying to push it. The best option to keep these cravings under control is to listen to your body and make time to get at least 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

### **ARE YOU STRESSED OR EXPERIENCING STRONG EMOTIONS?**

For many, eating is a way to comfort ourselves during stressful times or periods of intense emotion. Next time you experience a craving, take a moment to check in with yourself to see how you are feeling mentally and emotionally.

Allowing time to process the emotion without food or completing the stress cycle can reduce your cravings and what is often described as emotional eating. Suggestions for doing this include exercise, journaling, meditation or yoga, talking with a loved one, or watching a funny movie or video.

**If you feel you struggle with emotional eating, we suggest talking to your doctor or a nutritional therapist.**