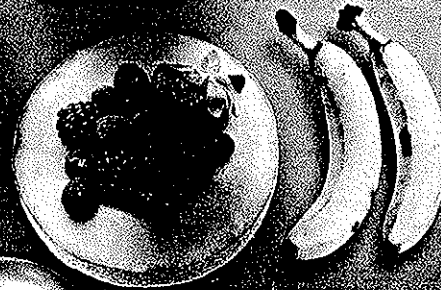
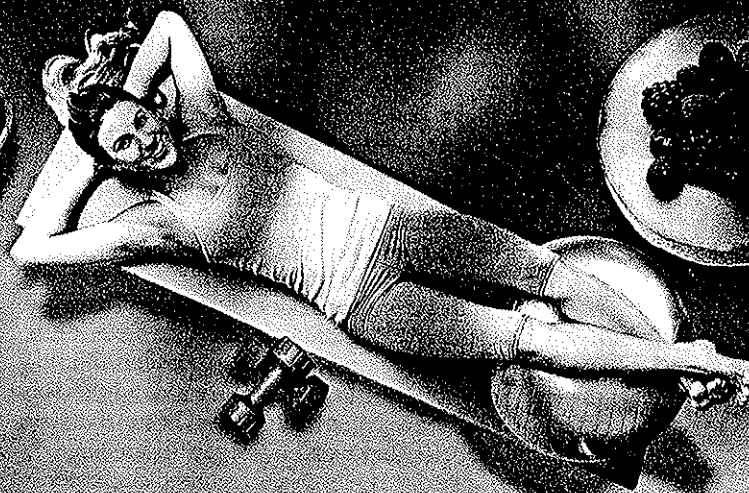


Nutrition Action

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EASY



50 Insider Tips to Keep You Healthy

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN & JAYNE HURLEY

It's tough to change your diet. We are creatures of habit.

Yet we change at the drop of a hat when we find a new cereal, soup, or frozen dinner at the supermarket. And we're perfectly willing to try a new salad, sandwich, or entrée on the restaurant menu.

Maybe that's because it's so easy to do those things. Well, here are 50 changes that we've made. (Okay, some we're still working on.) If any are new to you, why not give them a spin?

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EASY

50 Insider Tips to Keep You Healthy

Eat more fruits and vegetables. Cut back on salt, saturated fat, and sugar. Switch to whole grains. Exercise for at least an hour a day.

Many people know all that and more. But how do you translate those broad strokes into the dozens of diet and exercise decisions you make each day? Here are some of our favorite tips to get you started.

AT THE STORE

Buy a bag of cut veggies.

Maybe you shouldn't be too tired (or rushed or distracted) to wash and cut up your own broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower. But you are. Don't sweat it.

Companies like Dole and Mann's are happy to do it for you. And the cost isn't much higher if you consider that there's no waste.



Other options: buy your broccoli, carrots, and other vegetables at the salad bar or buy a bag of frozen (unseasoned) veggies, which come in Asian, Mediterranean, and other blends. Open bag, dump into a skillet or wok, add sauce, and cook (see p. 7). Dinner is served.

Replace processed meats with no-nitrite-added deli meats.

Red and processed meats are a "convincing cause of colorectal cancer," say the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research.¹ Eat no more than about 18 ounces of red meat

(beef, pork, lamb) a week and no processed meats at all, advised the experts.

"Ounce for ounce, consuming processed meat increases risk twice as much as consuming red meat," said their report.

The nitrites that are added to processed meats may make them worse than other red meats. To avoid them—and to dodge some sodium—look for no-nitrite-added, lower-sodium or no-salt-added deli meats by Applegate Farms, Boar's Head, Dietz & Watson, and Wellshire Farms.

Try a veggie burger.

People who eat more red meat have a higher risk of colorectal cancer. Seafood and poultry eaters do not.

But fish and chicken don't taste like burgers. Some veggie burgers do. And soy-based burgers (like Morningstar Farms Grillers) are protein-rich. (Check the label. Grain- or veggie-based burgers, like Gardenburgers, have less than 10 grams of protein.)

Veggie burgers have more salt than ground beef, but at least you don't have to worry about food poisoning from *E. coli*.

Switch to "thins" or light bread.

The landmark OmniHeart study tested diets that were rich in vegetables, fruit, and low-fat dairy foods and low in saturated fat, salt, and sugar.² All of them lowered blood pressure and LDL ("bad") cholesterol.

Each had just four or five servings of grain (preferably whole grain) for someone who needs 2,000 calories a day. Instead, people got most of their carbs from

vegetables, fruit, and beans. A serving of grain was just one slice of bread or a half cup of rice, cereal, or pasta. Uh-oh.



One way to stretch your grains: try thin whole-grain rolls (like Pepperidge Farm Deli Flats or Arnold or Oroweat Sandwich Thins), which have just 100 calories per bun.

Or try light breads (like Arnold or Oroweat Bakery Light or Pepperidge Farm Carb-Style or Very Thin), which have just 40 to 60 calories per slice—about half what you'd get in ordinary whole-grain breads.

Turn spinach into salads.

A 9 oz. bag of spinach makes three three-cup servings, says the Dole label. (In the OmniHeart study, one cup was a serving.)

A three-cup serving has 10 percent of a day's potassium, plus 510 percent of a day's vitamin K, 160 percent of a day's vitamin A, 40 percent of a day's vitamin C and folate, 15 percent of a day's magnesium and iron, and 8 percent of a day's calcium and fiber. All for 20 calories. 20!

Any greens are good greens, but spinach is a superstar. And so easy. (See p. 7 for recipes.)

Go for a whole-grain version of your favorite cereal.

Kashi 7 Whole Grain Nuggets instead of Post Grape-Nuts, bran flakes instead of corn flakes, and General Mills Total instead of Kellogg's Product 19 (though you don't need the vitamins that are added to either of them if you take a multivitamin).

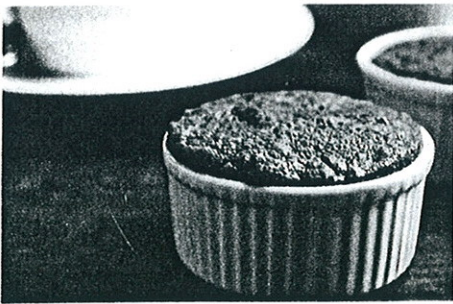
Buy sliced mango, cantaloupe, pineapple, or other fruit.

You'll still pay less than you would for a fruit salad at a restaurant.

Try a new vegetable.

"People who eat a wider variety of vegetables tend to be thinner," says Susan Roberts, director of the Energy Metabolism Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.³ That's probably because the vegetables are displacing higher-calorie foods.

"Something like half of all Americans' vegetables are iceberg lettuce, potatoes, onions, and canned tomatoes," says Roberts. "So there's a lot of room for increasing the variety of vegetables."



Buy a set of ramekins.

Look for ramekins (or other bowls) that hold just a half cup (4 oz.) of food. Use them to serve frozen yogurt, ice cream, or other sweets. The serving may look small, but it matches the serving on Nutrition Facts labels. It's a single scoop of ice cream.

Use frozen fruit for smoothies.

Blend unsweetened frozen strawberries or blueberries with milk or plain yogurt to make an instantly cold smoothie. Homemade smoothies trounce the sugar-loaded concoctions sold in restaurants.

Read labels to dodge salt.

You can now find canned tomatoes, tuna, and beans with no salt added. Zip.

Fresh chicken used to have no salt added. Now you have to check to make sure.

Check the Nutrition Facts label to see if a competing brand of any packaged food has less sodium. You'd be surprised.

Make junk food boring.

Trying to cut calories? Don't stock your kitchen with five kinds of cookies, ice cream, pastries, or other sweets.

"If you have a greater variety, you eat more," says Roberts. That also applies to a meal. "In a one-day study, people who were offered pasta in three different shapes ate 600 calories, but people who were offered pasta in one shape ate 500 calories," she notes.⁴

Variety is one reason people eat more food at restaurants, adds Roberts. "You never go out to eat the same thing you have in your fridge."

AT HOME

Eat plain yogurt or mix plain with sweetened yogurt.

Unsweetened yogurt offers the most nutrient bang for your calorie buck. For extra protein, try creamy-even-if-it's-fat-free plain Greek yogurt. If plain yogurt is too tart for you, mix plain and sweetened.

Replace a side of rice, potatoes, or pasta with beans.

Swap that side of rice or pasta or potatoes for a bean or lentil dish (see p. 7). Why?

In the OmniHeart study, the higher-protein diet (and the higher-unsaturated-fat diet) led to lower blood pressure, triglycerides, and LDL ("bad") cholesterol than the higher-carb diet.² And half the protein came from plant foods.

"You can make bean salads and bean soups," says Janis Swain, the dietitian who planned the OmniHeart meals. "Beans are inexpensive, so it's an economical way to get a good protein-vegetable mix."

Eat fish twice a week.

Their omega-3 fats may protect your heart. A fatty fish like salmon or trout is best.

Cover half your plate with vegetables or fruit.

Forget the "side" of veggies. They should occupy more plate real estate than your protein or pasta, rice, or potatoes.



The OmniHeart diets have 11 servings of fruit and vegetables a day. A serving is one piece of fruit, a half cup of cooked vegetables, or one cup of raw vegetable (like lettuce), so it's not that much. Your main-dish salad could easily be four servings.

Check serving sizes. Check serving sizes. Check serving sizes.

Does your cereal have 200 calories per cup or per half cup? Does your can of condensed soup contain one serving or 2½ servings? Does that frozen lasagna, pizza, burrito, pot pie, macaroni and cheese, or stir-fry dinner serve one, two, or more?

Don't check the calories or any other Nutrition Facts until you check the serving size. Even we sometimes forget.

Snack tip:

Lay slices of cantaloupe, honeydew, mango, or papaya on a plate, squeeze on fresh lime juice, eat.

Drink (mostly) calorie-free.

"Liquid calories don't register," says Susan Roberts. "If you drink a liquid in the middle of the morning, you eat as much at lunch as if you never drank anything."

That applies not just to sodas, but to fruit juices, energy drinks, and sweetened iced tea or coffee.⁵ (Milk, shakes, and smoothies do register, just not as much as the calories in a solid food.)

"The average American gets 22 percent of their calories from liquids," says Roberts. "That's a huge amount." Switching to calorie-free beverages "ought to be an easy way to get rid of calories."

In one study, people gained weight

after three weeks of drinking about three cans a day of regular soft drinks, but not after drinking that many diet soft drinks.⁶ And soda drinkers are more likely to gain weight than non-drinkers, according to dozens of studies.⁷

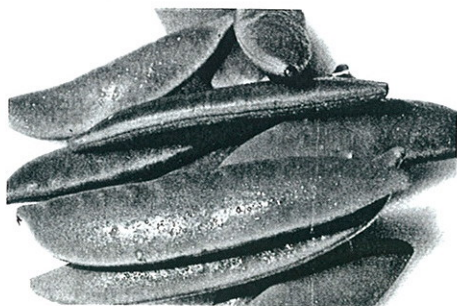
"Good grief," says Roberts. "Why would anyone drink a 12 oz. can of regular soda when you can save 150 calories with a diet soda?"

Better yet, avoid the questionable artificial sweeteners in most diet soft drinks by drinking water instead. Or sweeten your tea or coffee or lemonade (fresh-squeezed lemon plus ice water) with safe Splenda.

Add veggies to boost potassium and lower salt.

Mix a bagged salad kit with a bag of undressed lettuce. Add a pound of steamed broccoli to your favorite Chinese take-out dish. Add fresh or frozen veggies to frozen skillet meals. You can also add unseasoned bulgur, quick-cooking brown rice, or whole wheat couscous or orzo to an equal amount of a prepared seasoned grain.

Each mouthful ends up with more potassium and less salt. Why not give the old blood pressure a break?



Snack tip:

Open a bag of sugar snap peas. Rinse. Eat.

Make your snacks fruit or vegetables.

What better way to tide you over to your next meal than a low-calorie, light-yet-filling orange, half cantaloupe, peach, plum, banana, or a bowl of cherries, berries, or grapes? Try baby carrots, grape tomatoes, or slices of bell pepper or cucumber with a few tablespoons of hummus or bean dip. Yum.

Cook with canola or olive oil.

Replacing saturated fats (in meat and dairy) with unsaturated fats lowers LDL

("bad") cholesterol. Most people get plenty of polyunsaturated-rich soybean oil in restaurants and prepared foods (including mayonnaise and salad dressing). So at home, use either extra-virgin olive oil (when you want its flavor) or canola oil. Both are rich in monounsaturated fat.

Switch from tuna to salmon.

Canned salmon has more healthy omega-3 fats than canned tuna, and the salmon is almost always wild. Raincoast Trading and other companies offer unsalted canned salmon.

Squeeze in fruits and veggies.

Add diced bell pepper and halved grape tomatoes to tuna salad. Add grapes and diced apples to chicken salad. Add sautéed mushrooms, bell peppers, and onions to pasta. You'll feel full on fewer calories.

Try nuts instead of croutons.

Nuts and seeds have some plant protein and polyunsaturated fat, but they're too calorie dense to eat with abandon.

So sprinkle them on salads instead of croutons (which are usually salty white-flour bread). Or add them to yogurt, cereal, fruit, and vegetable dishes. For extra flavor, toast them first in the oven or a skillet until they *start* to turn brown.

Drink water before meals.

Trying to lose weight? Many people believe that drinking water helps them eat less. Researcher Brenda Davy has evidence that it works.

The associate professor of nutrition at Virginia Tech assigned 48 overweight men and women aged 55 to 75 to eat a low-calorie diet. Half were told to drink roughly two cups of water before each meal.⁸

After 12 weeks, the water drinkers lost about 16 pounds while the others lost 11 pounds. "It's an easy way to manage hunger and lose weight," says Davy.

Stick to one *small* cookie or chocolate or other sweet a day.

Sugars raise damaging triglycerides, and most people don't have space for their empty calories. In the OmniHeart trial, the healthiest diets had room for only one or two teaspoons of added sugars a day. A 6 oz. "fruit" yogurt or half cup of

ice cream has 3 to 5 teaspoons of sugar. Many breakfast cereals have 2 teaspoons in a small (¾-cup) serving.

Still, it may be unrealistic to banish nearly all sweets from your diet. Instead, stick with one piece of chocolate, a frozen fudge bar, or one small cookie a day. A 440-calorie, eight-teaspoons-of-sugar Panera Chocolate Chipper Cookie doesn't qualify. Sorry.

Snack tip:

Rinse container of blueberries. Eat.

Buy a pedometer.

Okay, you can't just buy it. You have to wear it. "Get a pedometer and aim for a 10,000-a-day step goal," says Davy. "That's about five miles of walking."



In a review of 26 studies on more than 2,700 people, researchers found that using a pedometer boosted activity by 27 percent.⁹ It helps to have a step goal.

"The nice thing is that the 10,000 steps can be accumulated over the day," says Davy. "If you know that you need to get your step count up and you're sitting at a computer, you're more inclined to get up and walk around."

Work out to TV.

Watching TV? Why not do some strength training? Crunches, push-ups, biceps curls, lunges, you name it—they may even be easier to get through in front of the tube.

Got a treadmill or stationary bicycle? You know where to park it.

Shoot for 8 to 12 reps.

To build strength, you have to use enough—but not too much—weight. Rule of thumb: if you can do at least 8, but no more than 12, repetitions, you're using the right weight.¹⁰ Up to 13? It's time to switch to a heavier weight. (Yay.)



AT A RESTAURANT

Appetizer: order a side salad.

"I wasn't that hungry, so I ordered an appetizer instead of an entrée," we recently overheard a young woman say. Yikes.

At a restaurant like The Cheesecake Factory, appetizers like quesadillas, spinach and cheese dip, nachos, Buffalo wings, and Thai lettuce wraps have 1,000 to 1,600 calories. They're as bad as or worse than an entrée.

Your best bet: order a house or side salad...or just wait for your entrée.

Pack up half your meal.

"Every portion of food at a restaurant is two to three times what you need," says Susan Roberts. "Restaurants are toxic because they condition you to expect large portions. So at home, regular portions seem stingy."

Solution? "Before the food gets to your plate simply tell the server, 'I only want half. Could you put the rest in a container and I'll take it with me?'" she suggests. "It's a really easy thing to do, and it means that the calories aren't sitting in front of you."

No bread or chips, thanks.

Do you need a basket of bread or tortilla chips on your table? Didn't think so.

Asian: veggies, not noodles.

At Asian restaurants, order mixed vegetables with sautéed (not deep-fried and breaded) chicken, tofu, shrimp, or scallops. You'll end up with 600 to 900 calories, but that's still better than the 1,000 to 1,500 calories in noodle dishes like lo mein and pad Thai, or in deep-fried dishes like Orange or Crispy Beef, Sweet & Sour Pork, and General Tso's, Lemon, Honey, and Sesame Chicken.

Pizza: thin, not thick, crust.

Thin crust should save 150 calories (at California Pizza Kitchen) to 800 calories (at Uno Chicago Grill). Also ask for just half the cheese, a whole-grain crust (if available), and veggies instead of meat or multiple cheese toppings.

Mexican: tacos, not a burrito.

Order one or two tacos or one enchilada à la carte with a green (not taco) salad and you have a chance of leaving a Mexican restaurant with fewer than 1,000 calories. Fajitas? Fine, if you share.

Mexican: a bowl, not a burrito.

Even a chicken burrito at Chipotle or Qdoba has 1,000 to 1,300 calories. A burrito bowl has no tortilla, so it trims 300 calories' worth of white flour off your plate. You save another 200 calories if you skip the rice.

Greek: souvlaki, not a gyro.

A gyro (pita sandwich with fatty shaved meat) packs about 800 calories and a day's saturated fat and sodium. Get a chicken souvlaki pita and you'll cut the calories in half.

Steak: sirloin or filet mignon.

With about 400 calories, those leaner cuts beat the 600 to 1,200 calories in fattier cuts like ribeye, Porterhouse, New York strip, T-bone, prime rib, or anything else (except grilled chicken or fish) on a steakhouse menu.



Salad, not sandwich.

Not sure whether to pick a main-dish salad or a sandwich? Go with the salad. Most restaurants offer enough chicken, nuts, beans, and other toppings to fill you up.

Double the veggies.

Instead of potatoes, rice, or pasta, ask for two sides of vegetables or extra salad. For variety, check out the veggies that come with other entrées on the menu.

Think petite.

Look for appetizers, sandwiches, desserts, or other items that the restaurant calls "small," "mini," "demi," or "treat" size. Think of them as normal, and everything else as supersized.

Bagels: make it mini or thin.

Who wants to spend 300 to 400 calories on a (typically) white-flour bagel? And replace the thick layer of cream cheese with a light swipe. At Au Bon Pain, a

serving of plain lite cream cheese still has 120 calories (and almost no protein).

Get salad dressing on the side.

Salad dressings can add 400 to 600 calories to a typical main-dish salad. Order your dressing on the side so you can add less (which works if you toss it well).

Coffeeshouse: go light or "skinny."

In a (16 oz.) grande "skinny" latte or Macchiato at Starbucks, the sugar-free syrup and the non-fat milk each cuts 70 calories. A Light Frappuccino saves about 200 calories, thanks to non-fat milk, no whipped cream, and Splenda instead of sugar.

Potato: sour cream, not butter.

Love potatoes? A loaded baked potato (cheese, bacon, sour cream, butter) has 500 calories. A side of mashed has 400. Go with a plain baked potato (300 calories) and just 1 tablespoon of sour cream (25 calories and 1½ grams of saturated fat) rather than butter (100 calories and 7 grams of sat fat).

No cheese, please.

Restaurants squeeze cheese in or on nearly every sandwich, salad, pasta, taco, and burger, and on many kinds of steaks, fries, chicken breasts, vegetables, soups, breads, biscuits, and rolls. At some restaurants, you'll find cheese on pretty much every non-Asian dish on the menu. Who needs the calories and saturated fat?

Ice cream: get "kid" size.

Order the smallest serving (not necessarily a "small") of ice cream or frozen yogurt. Add 25 calories for a cake cone, 60 for a sugar cone, and 160 for a waffle cone. A chocolate-dipped waffle cone adds about 300 calories. Urp.

And beware the Nutrition Facts at your favorite frozen-yogurt shop. The imaginary half-cup serving may be less than even the smallest size the chain offers.

¹ www.dietandcancerreport.org

² *J. Am. Med. Assoc.* 294: 2455, 2005.

³ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 69: 440, 1999.

⁴ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 42: 932, 1985.

⁵ *Int. J. Obes. Relat. Metab. Disord.* 24: 794, 2000.

⁶ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 51: 963, 1990.

⁷ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 84: 274, 2006.

⁸ *Obesity* 18: 300, 2010.

⁹ *J. Am. Med. Assoc.* 298: 2296, 2007.

¹⁰ www.exrx.net/WeightTraining/Guidelines.html