

5 Small Changes for Healthier Eating

By Chef Eric Wood | Executive Chef, Hamilton Health Sciences Volunteer Association

Nobody likes to start a diet. Big changes are intimidating and difficult to keep up with, so start small and build from there. Instead of hard numerical goals like weight or calorie counts, focus on building good habits. Here are some tips that could be a good place to start:

1. Introduce meatless options

A vegetarian diet may not be for everyone, but introducing more plant-based options to your routine can still impact your health. Try one or two meatless days a week or reserve meat for dinner and eat vegetarian at lunch and breakfast. Reducing your meat consumption is not only good for you but also good for the environment. Meat production, especially beef and lamb, contributes significantly to climate change.

2. Reduce liquid calories

It's easy to underestimate the amount of empty calories in beverages. Even drinks marketed as healthy options, such as smoothies, juices and sports drinks, can contain high amounts of sugar. Make these a treat instead of an everyday choice. If you do choose a sweetened beverage, be mindful of the portion size – can you still be satisfied by a smaller size?

3. Put raw vegetables on the table

Vegetables are loaded with fibre and nutrients and are easy to prepare. You can even cut up a few days' worth of fresh vegetables and keep them in the fridge. If you're prone to nibbling, you may find that it makes grazing on veggies an easier choice than going back for seconds.

4. Practice mindful eating

Remove distractions like TV or your phone, and take your time when eating. Use all of your senses to enjoy the taste, aroma and texture of your meal. Listen to your body and be aware of when you are satisfied. Studies have shown that participants practicing mindful eating are more likely to choose healthy snacks and tend to eat smaller portions.

5. Cook more meals at home

When you cook at home, you can control the quality and source of the ingredients, as well as the amount of salt, fat, and additives. This will also help avoid the temptation of indulgent (and expensive!) restaurant food. Take the opportunity to learn new techniques and try new ingredients.

Want to learn more about healthy eating? Visit the Canada's Food Guide web site for more information:

- **Tips for Healthy Eating:** <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/tips-for-healthy-eating/>
- **Food Guide Snapshot:** <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/>