

## Food Journaling: How to Keep Track of What You Eat

Food journaling is one of the most powerful things you can do to reach your healthy eating goals.

Tracking what you eat and drink each day can:

- Make you more aware of what and when you eat.
- Help you discover your personal eating patterns and habits.
- Reinforce your new healthy habits and keep you on track for successful long-term change.

Journaling is not about judging yourself or feeling guilty or ashamed. Use your journal to support change.

There are many different ways to keep track of what you eat, including food tracking apps or websites, notebooks on your computer or tablet, paper diaries or scrap paper. The Food Journal below is one way to track what you eat and drink. Use the option that works best for you.

### Getting started with food journaling

Start by tracking when, what and how much you eat and drink each day. Your food journal will be more accurate when you record your food and drinks right after eating. The best way to know how much you are eating is to measure your food and beverage portions.

- Use common household measurements to track amounts of foods and drinks (e.g. 250 ml (1 cup), 5 ml (1 teaspoon) etc.)

OR

- Use the shape of your hand or common objects to estimate serving size. For example, one fist of tossed green salad; two tennis balls of white rice; one thumb tip of butter

With practice, you will be able to estimate portion size without having to measure.

You can also learn a lot about your eating habits by simply tracking the types of food and drinks you have each day. You can even track just one type or group of food or drink. For example, the number of vegetables and fruit you have each day, or the number of glasses of water you drink. The Vegetable and Fruit Tracker at the end of this handout can help you track how many servings of vegetables and fruit you have each day.

### More advanced food journaling

What you track in your food journal will depend on your healthy eating goals. In addition to tracking what and how much you eat and drink, consider tracking some of the following:

- hunger and fullness levels before and after eating
- eating environment (e.g. TV room; office; car)
- thoughts, feelings and emotions before and after eating

### Using your food journal

Consistent tracking of everything you eat and drink for several days helps you learn about what you eat, where you eat, when you eat and why you eat. This is your individual pattern of eating. The longer you journal, the more you will learn.

After journaling, take some time to reflect on the information you've gathered. Look for current habits that you either want to change or reinforce, and think of new habits you want to add. Use your food journal to take small, achievable steps towards reaching your healthy eating goal(s).

## Changing your eating habits

Adding a new healthy habit, instead of trying to break an old habit, is a good first step towards improving your diet. There are some common habits that make healthy eating easier for many people. Think about adding one or more of these to your current pattern of eating:

- Eat a balanced breakfast that includes a source of protein every day. Good sources of protein include eggs, yogurt, nuts, seeds, tofu, lean meats, poultry and fish.
- Have a fruit or vegetable at every meal and snack.
- Eat with friends and family, away from distractions like the TV, computer, tablet or phone.
- Eat slowly, taking the time to listen to your body's fullness cues, and eat until you're satisfied, not stuffed.
- Eat regularly, and avoid skipping or delaying meals. This might include 3 meals a day for some people, or 3 meals plus snacks for others.
- Plan your meals in advance. Make meals that you enjoy and look forward to them.
- Cook and eat at home as much as possible.
- Put healthy snacks in easy reach. Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on your dinner table or counter. Have washed and cut fruit and vegetables in the fridge.
- Serve water with meals.
- Schedule 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night, including weekends. You will make healthier eating decisions if you are well rested.

**For More Information:** Consider talking to a registered dietitian for support. A dietitian can review your food journal, help you understand your eating habits, and share ideas for change to help you reach your healthy eating goals.

Call HealthLink BC at **8-1-1**:

- Ask to speak to a registered dietitian for information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences.
- Ask to speak to a qualified exercise professional for personalized guidance on physical activity.

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**Reflecting on Your Food Journal**

Look over your food journal. What do you notice? What went well?

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What is one change you could make to help you eat healthier?

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### Vegetable and Fruit Tracker

<b>Day of the week</b>	<p><b>Put a check mark (√) in one circle for each serving of vegetable and fruit you have in a day</b></p> <p>Examples of one serving are: 1 piece of fruit; ½ cup of vegetables or chopped fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens</p>	<p><b>Total number of servings each day</b></p> <p>Count up the check marks</p>
<b>Monday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Thursday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Friday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Saturday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Sunday</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	