

INSIGHTS ON HEALTHY EATING AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

A FRESH APPROACH



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HEALTHY EATING AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

1. **Why we eat: Understanding and controlling hunger, desire, and food addiction**
2. **Simple secrets to making good food choices**
3. **Taking control of your eating: A step-by-step guide**
4. **Tips for eating out and business travel**

Section 1: Why we eat

For most of our existence as humans, we have had two reasons for eating: to satisfy hunger, and to indulge desire*. There is, however, a third and increasingly common reason for eating: *failure of self-regulation* caused by the irresistible attraction of today's highly tasty foods. It's hard to say "No!"

Eating for hunger:

The goal of "eating for hunger" is to replace the calories that we expend in day-to-day living. As long as there is food available, hunger ensures that we stay in calorie balance. The food does not have to be tasty—hunger, as they say, is the best sauce. A truly hungry person will eat anything.

Eating for hunger is triggered by a hormone called *ghrelin*, the "hunger hormone." Ghrelin is made by the empty stomach and dumped into the bloodstream. Ghrelin travels to the brain and helps create the sensation of hunger. As the hungry person starts to eat and the first few bites of food enter the stomach, it shuts down ghrelin production. Hunger begins to decline. However, it takes about 15-20 minutes for hunger to disappear completely. So if I finish a heaped plate of food in 10 minutes, I will continue to eat because I am still hungry. *But if I eat even a small amount of food over 15-20 minutes, I will push back from the table with no hunger.* This "20-minute rule" is an effective weight management tool. If I eat slowly, I will eat less.

Eating for desire:

The goal of "eating for desire" is to take advantage of surplus calories to make and store fat for a rainy day. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors lived on a food supply that went up and down. To survive periods of scarcity, one had to make and store fat whenever high-calorie food was available. To store fat, a person has to eat beyond hunger, which is what happens when tasty food is available. *Over-eating to store fat was a necessary survival mechanism, so we are hard-wired to find high-calorie foods tasty, to desire such foods.* For our distant ancestors, tasty foods were all natural foods: sweet fruits, starchy roots, perhaps a honeycomb now and then. Such foods were available in limited amounts and only at certain times of the year. Finding and collecting food was hard work, and any stored fat was used up when food became scarce again. Obesity was never an issue.

**We also eat when we are stressed, lonely, or partying with friends. But we also eat when we are not stressed or lonely. These are secondary reasons for eating. Hunger and desire are primary.*

Eating from Failure of Self-regulation:

We now have high-calorie foods available year-round in unlimited amounts. Even worse, most of these are “designer” foods that are far tastier than anything nature can provide—there’s apples, and then there’s apple pie à la mode. It is easy to say “no” to an apple, but it not so easy to refuse apple pie, chocolate cake, ice-cream, or salted cashews. Not only do we eat such foods in excess, but the extreme pleasure from eating these foods can generate intense cravings and elevate normal desire into a state that some are calling food addiction. “I like it” turns into “I need it.”

These intense cravings can inhibit rational choice and encourage indiscriminate eating. This is why diets tend to fail. In the beginning, when the pounds are going away quickly it is easy to stick to the diet. But the weight loss then slows or stops, as it always does. The old familiar cravings begin to come back. One misstep today, another one tomorrow, and that’s the end of that diet.

Not everyone is equally susceptible to the call of food. Those who are immune are able to maintain a normal weight with less effort. But for the rest of us, eating rationally in today’s food environment is hard so we often succumb to the call of food. I prefer to call this a *failure of self-regulation*, because it is not quite the same as substance addiction. Alcohol, cocaine, nicotine etc. hijack the desire mechanism and won’t let go, which is why de-addiction is so difficult. Designer food, on the other hand, just leads to an elevation of *normal* desire into food cravings. For most people, these cravings disappear within a few days of removing designer foods from the plate. Being free of food cravings is a wonderfully exhilarating experience.

The danger, of course, is re-addiction. Our food environment is set up to make us fail. It is critical that there be no highly attractive food in the fridge, the pantry, and in the break-room at work.

Note: For more information on failure of self-regulation and how to overcome it, see Dr. Kalia’s book “Don’t Take Dieting Advice From a Skinny Person.” The book also has a step-by-step, real-world, low-glycemic eating plan for life-long weight management; lots of menus and simple recipes; information on nutrients and nutrition; tips on stress reduction; explanation of lab tests such as cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar; and much more. The book is available from www.DoctorAlok.com or directly from Amazon.com.

Take-home message:

1. We eat to satisfy hunger and to indulge desire. In today’s food environment, many of us also eat because of the compulsion caused by food addiction.
2. Food addiction can be eliminated in a few days by increasing natural foods and eliminating designer foods from the diet.

Section 2: Simple secrets to making good food choices

Sensible eating has these simple rules:

- Eat less of foods with refined starch and/or sugar.
- Eat more of natural foods rich in a) omega-3 fats, b) anti-oxidants, and c) fiber.

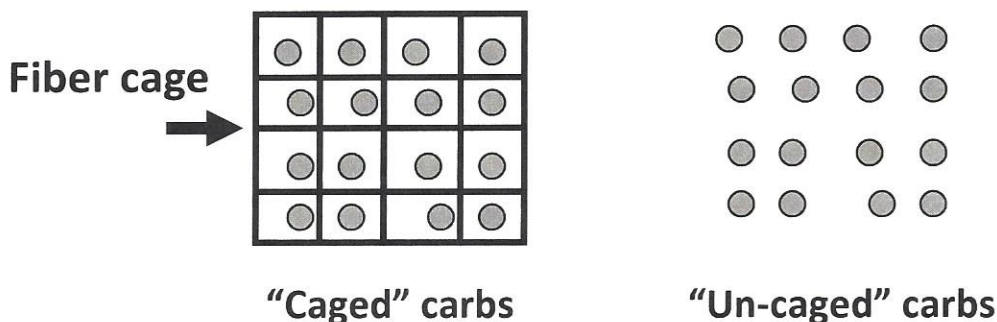
That's it. There is no need to count calories or look at nutritional information on packages. This eating program can be applied at home, in a restaurant, or when traveling.

Eat less of foods with refined starch and sugar:

Why? Because refined starch and sugar are easily converted into fat. Refined starch includes all-purpose flour, baking flour, "enriched" flour and any other flour or grain from which the bran (fiber) has been removed, such as white rice.

Natural foods such as whole grains, beans, lentils, and most fruits and vegetables are rich in fiber, so any starch they contain is surrounded by fiber. Think of the starch being locked up in a fiber cage. Before the digestive enzymes can get to the starch, they have to break down the fiber cage. This takes time. We can call such starch "caged starch" or "caged carbs."

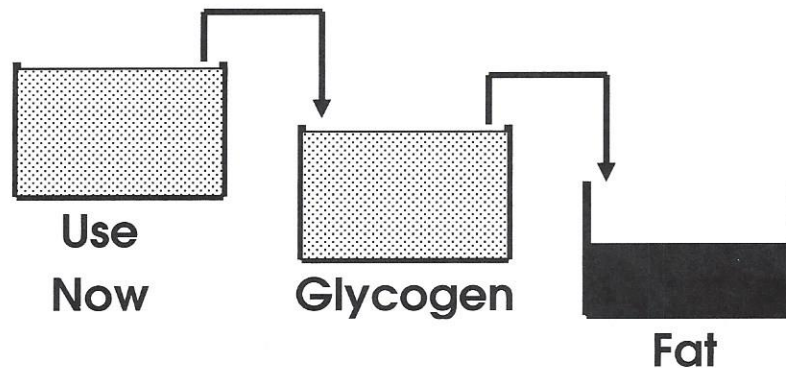
Refined foods have little or no fiber. Refined flour has no fiber. Polished white rice has no fiber. Root vegetables such as potatoes are rich in starch; they do contain fiber, but cooking softens the fiber cage and frees up the starch. Also, all fruit juices are mostly sugar with little or no fiber. We can call such starch and sugar "un-caged carbs."



Chemically speaking, starch is just a long necklace made of glucose beads. Glucose is a type of sugar. During digestion, starch is broken down into glucose which is then absorbed into the body. When we eat starch, we absorb glucose. *The faster glucose enters the body, the more likely it is to be turned into fat.* This is where fiber makes a difference. If the starch in food is caged (surrounded by fiber), it will be digested more slowly, so less of it will be turned into fat. To repeat: Glucose from caged starch enters the body slowly and is less likely to be turned into fat. Glucose from un-caged, or fiber-free, starch enters the body quickly and is more likely to be turned into fat. Here's what happens:

As glucose from un-caged starch floods into body, the blood glucose level quickly rises. The responsibility for bringing the blood glucose level back to normal rests with insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas. Insulin removes glucose from the blood and stashes it in three different tanks:

- The first is the "use now" tank which stores glucose that is needed right now for energy production. A person who uses 2400 calories a day is using approximately 100 calories an hour (2400/24). This means that the use-now tank only needs 100 calories every hour. If calories are entering the body at a rate higher than this, the excess will have to be diverted into the next tank—the "glycogen" tank. Note: The body also uses fat calories to make energy; to keep things simple, I am ignoring the fat.
- The second tank is the glycogen tank. Glycogen is a storage form of glucose. Glucose stored as glycogen can be easily accessed if food is scarce or if there is a long gap between meals. But there is a catch—the total capacity of this tank is only about 1800 calories. For most of us, food is never scarce, so this tank usually stays topped-up and unable to accept much additional glucose. This means that glucose now spills over into the third tank—the "fat" tank.
- The fat tank is the final storage space. This tank has an unlimited capacity!



So, the insulin first drops off whatever glucose it can into the "use now" tank. Once this fills up, it starts to top off the glycogen tank. When this is full, the remaining glucose is converted into fat and sent by the insulin into the fat tank. This is a problem, because the body is reluctant to give up its stored fat—fat is insurance against famine; *fat is security*.

One of the principles of healthy eating and weight management is to prevent overflow of calories from the glycogen tank into the fat tank. This overflow is less likely to occur with natural, unrefined, unprocessed carbohydrates that still have the fiber cage. These take longer to digest, so glucose trickles slowly into the use-now tank *and is used up as it comes in with little or no overflow into the glycogen tank and the fat tank*. Take away the fiber cage and glucose floods into the body, overwhelms the use-now and glycogen tanks, and ends up in the fat tank.

An important consideration: If there is no insulin, the body cannot store much fat. The most important stimulus for insulin to be released into the blood is glucose. So, a simple way to look at fat storage is: no glucose = no insulin = no fat storage.

Note: The effect that glucose from a food has on the blood glucose level (how high it goes and how long it stays up) is known as the “glycemic index” of that food. The glycemic index of glucose is set at 100, and the glycemic index of other foods is compared to glucose. Glucose from a food with a high glycemic index will enter the body faster than from a food with a lower glycemic index. A glycemic index of 55 or less is considered “low”; 56-69 is “medium” and 70 or more is “high”.

All-purpose flour, enriched wheat flour, refined cornmeal, short-grain rice, and “mealy” potatoes have a high glycemic index. Whole grains, long-grain rice, most fruits, and milk have a medium glycemic index. Beans, lentils, and strawberries have a low glycemic index. More information on the glycemic index of foods is available at <http://www.gilisting.com/2005/05/glycemic-index-of-foods.html> and at www.glycemicindex.com. Note: The glycemic index measures only glucose. Many foods such as fruits, milk, table sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, and agave nectar have other sugars besides glucose, so the glycemic index of such foods can be deceptively low even though the total sugar content is high.

Take-home message:

1. Starch in natural foods is mixed with fiber. It is digested slowly and is less likely to be turned into fat.
2. Starch in processed foods is usually fiber-free and is more likely to be turned into fat.

Eating more omega-3 fats, anti-oxidants, and fiber:

In addition to an excess of refined starch and sugar, a deficiency or imbalance of three nutrients contributes to the body-food mismatch: omega-3 fats vs. omega-6 fats; anti-oxidants; and fiber. Increasing the intake of these three nutrients will make the diet healthier.

Omega-3 and omega-6 fats:

Our modern diet promotes an imbalance between omega-3 fats and omega-6 fats.

Omega 6 fats are found in seeds such as soybeans and corn (there are a few exceptions—flax and chia seeds, for example, are rich in omega-3 fats). Omega-6 fats help the body fight infection by the process of inflammation. However, too much omega-6 fat in the diet may lead to unnecessary and excessive inflammation with worsening of diseases such as asthma and arthritis. There is also evidence that excessive omega-6 intake may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Omega-3 fats are found in green vegetables, and also in deep-sea cold water fish and phytoplankton (green marine algae). Omega-3 fats are anti-inflammatory and balance the effects of omega-6 fats acids.

To remain in good health, the diet needs to contain both omega-6 and omega-3 fats in an approximate ratio of no more than 4:1. A balanced diet that is close to nature provides both types of fat in the healthy proportions.

Unfortunately, the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 in the American diet is now more like 10-1; some estimates place it as high as 30:1. This is because of the tremendous increase of corn and soybean products in the food chain, both as frying oil and as animal feed.

Meat from corn-fed animals has less omega-3 and more omega-6 than meat from grass fed animals. In contrast, the whole ocean food chain is based on green algae that make lots of omega-3s. This is why deep sea fish and fish oil are a rich source of omega-3 fats. Farm raised catfish and tilapia are not likely to contain much omega-3.

Take-home message:

1. Omega-3 fats are found in the green parts of the plant; omega-6 fats are found in seeds. We need more omega-3 in our diet!
2. Meat from grass fed animals has a higher proportion of omega-3 fats.
3. The ocean food chain is based on phytoplankton, which is green. Deep-sea fatty fish such as salmon and sardines are a great source of omega-3 fats.
4. Farm raised fresh-water fish are probably not a good source of omega-3.

Anti-oxidants:

Every cell in the body has numerous tiny engines called *mitochondria* that use oxygen and fuel (carbohydrates and fats) to make energy. One of the by-products of energy production is activated oxygen atoms or *oxygen radicals*, also known as "*free*" radicals. Oxygen radicals are corrosive; they can damage cells and tissues and have been associated with atherosclerosis, aging, senility, and the development of cancer.

Anti-oxidants are chemicals that neutralize oxygen radicals and make them harmless. Colorful vegetables and fruits contain lots of anti-oxidants. Green tea, red wine, and dark chocolate are also high in anti-oxidants. Eating raw or lightly cooked colorful vegetables and fruits provides plenty of anti-oxidants. Boiling and processing can destroy some of the anti-oxidants in food. In addition to anti-oxidants, colorful vegetables and fruits are also rich in vitamins and minerals.

Take home message:

1. Have at least one meal daily that is rich in anti-oxidants. Colorful fruits, vegetables, and berries are good!
2. A diet that is high in anti-oxidants will also be high in natural vitamins and minerals.

Fiber:

The fiber in our food plays a critical role in maintaining good health.

There are two kinds of fiber: insoluble fiber and soluble fiber. Each has a different function within the intestine.

Insoluble fiber is found in the outer protective coating (bran) of all grains and beans; it is the “cage” that slows the digestion of starch and the absorption of sugar. Green vegetables and crunchy fruits are also a rich source of insoluble fiber. Insoluble fiber provides bulk (roughage) to the intestinal contents, which keeps things moving. A lack of insoluble fiber in the diet leads to constipation and increases the risk of diverticulosis, appendicitis, and possibly colon cancer.

Soluble fiber is found in beans, legumes, quinoa, oats, and in fruits such as berries, plums, pears, and bananas. Soluble fiber swells up to form a gel when it comes in contact with water. This gel can slow the absorption of glucose in the intestine and also provides a feeling of fullness. Soluble fiber slows the absorption of cholesterol. This is why oats are able to lower the blood cholesterol level, but beans and legumes will do the same thing.

Fiber also feeds the bacteria in the colon and keeps them healthy. It is now becoming clear that having healthy bacteria in the colon is critical for good physical and mental health.

Take home message:

1. Insoluble fiber forms a cage for starch and sugar and adds roughage to the diet.
2. Beans and legumes are rich in soluble fiber and reduce the rate of glucose absorption—they make the meal less fattening. Beans will keep you lean!
3. Dietary fiber helps maintain a healthy population of gut bacteria.

Section 3: Taking control of your eating - A step-by-step guide

Let's us convert the above principles into an eating program that promotes self-regulation and healthy food choices.

Talking of choices, there is a difference between *pleasure* and *happiness*. If I succumb to temptation and eat a piece of cake, knowing that I shouldn't—I will have a few minutes of pleasure, but I will not be happy because I know I lost that battle. If I resist eating the cake, I will deny myself a few minutes of pleasure, but I will be happy for the rest of the day because I won that round. With this in mind...

The program has eight steps.

1. Know what you are going to eat before you get hungry
2. Have a quick and healthy breakfast
3. Have two snacks daily: a mid-morning snack and a pre-dinner snack
4. Have a "veggie-heavy" meal daily
5. Have a plated "meat-starch-veggie" meal daily
6. Enjoy a drink—or two (strictly optional)!
7. Cheat occasionally
8. Avoid temptation- keep the tigers away

These eight steps form a complete healthy eating program. Even one step, such as planning your meals ahead of time or having a mid-morning snack will take you in the right direction. The more steps you incorporate into your daily eating, the better job you will do of looking after your body.

Step 1: Know what you are going to eat before you get hungry

The best way to do this is to spend a few minutes every evening to chart your breakfast, snacks, lunch, and dinner for the next day. We are surrounded by tempting foods. If you wait until you are hungry to decide what you are going to eat, you will make bad choices – especially if it's been a rough day and you have no energy left to fight temptation. But if you already have an eating plan in place, then there are no choices to be made; you just follow the plan. Planning ahead and taking control of your meals is the most important first step in a healthy eating plan. *Being proactive about your food choices costs nothing, but it can save your life.*

Step 2: Have a quick and healthy breakfast

Most breakfast foods such as breads and cereals are high in fiber-free starch and sugar. Avoid them.

A slice of sprouted grain bread, such as Ezekiel® bread (buy the type sold in the orange wrapper) with a tasty topping makes for a quick and healthy breakfast. Butter, cheese, or an egg is good topping *if there is no medical reason to avoid these*. For a change, try peanut butter topped with sliced strawberries or apple. Delicious! Another good breakfast choice is steel-cut oats with a little butter, fruit, and cinnamon.

A home-made protein shake, such as with Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard Whey, also makes for a quick breakfast. You can add veggies or fresh fruit to the shake. Don't add more fruit than you would eat at one time if you were eating just the fruit—blending breaks down the fiber cage, and a lot of fruit in your shake means a lot of un-caged, fast absorbed sugar. That's not good. To clean your blender, just fill it with water, add dishwashing liquid, run it for a few seconds, drain and rinse.

A spoonful of sugar in your tea or coffee is fine. *Avoid all kinds of fruit juice – these are loaded with sugar.* Also avoid artificial sweeteners; not only might they increase late-morning hunger, but a recent study also suggests that they may *raise* the blood sugar level.

Step 3: Take a snack-pack to work

A small snack an hour or two before lunch and before dinner will suppress hunger and help you make better meal choices. A typical snack-pack is 10 walnut halves or 20 unsalted almonds + half an apple *or* a small piece of hard cheese (½" X ½" X 1"). If you have even the slightest hunger between breakfast and lunchtime, dip into the snack-pack. If you are going to eat out at lunchtime, make sure to finish off the snack-pack as you leave for the restaurant. This will reduce hunger and you won't yield to temptation.

In the evening, have a small pre-dinner snack. Fruit or berries with a few nuts *or* a small piece of cheese will take the edge off your hunger before you sit down at the table. You can have this snack as much as two hours before dinnertime, but no less than 20 minutes prior to dinner because it takes that long to suppress hunger.

Step 4: Have a "veggie-heavy" meal daily

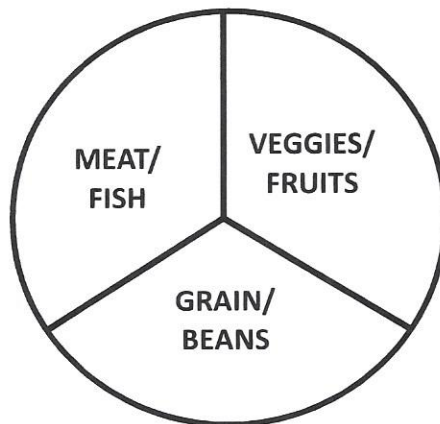
Fresh, brightly colored vegetables have micronutrients that are critical for good health—anti-oxidants, omega-3 fats, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Adding some protein and fat makes the meal more filling. Here are some guidelines.

- a. The meal should consist mainly of colorful and crunchy vegetables and fruits. The color provides anti-oxidants, vitamins, minerals and some omega-3; the crunch is the fiber.
- b. A colorful salad makes a good tune-up meal, but the veggies don't always have to be raw. Grilled, broil, sauté or steam your veggies but retain some color and crunch. A piece of cooked broccoli should still look and feel like broccoli.
- c. About 70% of the plate should be fruits and veggies. The rest can be protein and fat. Beans are a good source of protein, starch, and fiber. Meat, fish, or cheese can also be used as a protein source. Feel free to add some chopped boiled egg and drizzle on real salad dressing. The star of this meal, however, should be colorful plant products.
- d. *There should be no bread or other white carbs and sugar in this meal. If you are eating in a restaurant, send back the garlic bread, the pita, the rolls, the chips!* White carbs and sugar will cause an insulin spike—and you don't want that. (See "An important consideration" towards the end of section 2).

Step 5: Have a “meat-starch-veggie” meal daily

This is the typical plated meal. The veggie-heavy meal in step 4 provides *micronutrients*; this meal is the sustenance meal, the *macronutrient* meal. It provides protein, fat, and carbs, along with more fiber and goodness from vegetables and fruits. A useful way of putting together a sustenance meal is to make up a 3-part plate.

- a. Imagine a dinner plate divided into three equal parts as shown below.



- b. Think of the meat being in one third, the vegetables/fruit in the next third, and the carbohydrates (grains or beans) in the last third. Of course, you do not actually have to divide the plate into three, but this gives you an idea of how much of each type of food should be contained in a sustenance meal. In reality, the veggies need not be restricted to a “third of a plate” but the meat and carbs should be. Also, you do not have to fill the plate to the edge- leaving an empty border is OK. Note: Root vegetables count as starch, not as veggies.
- c. If possible, for the protein use grass fed beef, free range chicken, or ocean fish. Beans can also be used as the protein.
- d. Leave the veggies a little crunchy.
- e. What you put in the carbohydrate section depends on your situation. If you are not trying to lose weight, you can use any carbohydrate, free or caged. Bread, potatoes, or white rice—it does not really matter *because you are controlling the amount to a third of the plate*. However, if you are trying to lose weight or are really serious about eating healthy, use carbs that have at least some fiber. Long grain brown rice, a quinoa + lentil pilaf (mix them up and cook them together- just add some extra water), whole wheat pasta, sprouted grain or whole-grain bread, or lightly cooked root vegetables (other than potatoes) are all good. Beans, in addition to being used as protein (see above) can also be used as a low-glycemic starch.
- f. If you don’t want to have any starch on your plate (I usually don’t), just double the veggies.

Eat this meal slowly, taking about 20 minutes. This is critical! Eating slowly gives the body a chance to keep up with the food intake and gradually reduce hunger so when the food is gone, so is the hunger. If at the end of 20 minutes you are still hungry, eat some more of the same food.

Step 6: Have a drink—or two, if you are a big guy

If you drink alcohol, a glass of red wine or a jigger of scotch or other hard liquor at dinnertime is OK. However, if you are trying to lose weight you may want to give this up. Alcohol leads to fat storage. Red wine (or a little bit of alcohol in any form) may be good for health, but losing weight is better!

Step 7: Cheat occasionally

Once or twice a week, ease up on the restrictions and have a fancy meal. Eat something that you have been looking forward to. An occasional indulgence makes it easier to eat healthy the rest of the time. I prefer to not call this “cheating” – I think the “Freestyling” sounds so much better!

Here are the rules for a Freestyling meal:

- a. The Freestyling meal must be a *meal*. A large bag of chips and a six-pack does not qualify.
- b. The meal must be eaten in a restaurant because there is automatic portion control—when the food is gone, it’s gone. Cooking or bringing home tasty food is an invitation to overeat.
- c. Eat a little something before leaving for the restaurant. It will help you stay in control.
- d. Have an appetizer and ask the server to “not start the entrée” until the appetizer is done (remember the 20-minute rule). Enjoy the entrée, but don’t go overboard— the 8 oz. steak is a better choice than the larger options. Order a side of veggies- mushrooms, asparagus, broccoli, whatever. A starch, such as a small baked potato or side of pasta is fine. Share the dessert with your companion. Enjoy your meal and leave the restaurant knowing that you stayed in control.
- e. Finally, make sure there is at least a three-day gap between Freestyling meals, otherwise you risk re-addiction.

Step 8: Avoid temptation- keep the tigers away

At home, clean out your refrigerator and pantry. Remove all food that calls out to you—salted nuts, chips, fried chicken, ice-cream....

At work, encourage your employees and co-workers to not leave tempting foods in the break room. Enlist them in your efforts to eat healthy and encourage them to join you in your quest.

Addendum: A few thoughts on exercise

Exercise is great for improving cardiovascular fitness and muscle strength. Weight-bearing exercise helps maintain strong bones. Exercise can also relieve tension and improve the mood. Moderate exercise, done within the guidelines recommended by your physician, is an important component of weight management, especially as one gets older. Of course, exercise should not be carried to the point of injury or exhaustion.

There are a couple of caveats concerning exercise. Firstly, exercise can lead to justification for eating the wrong foods. “I ran two miles, so I deserve this donut.” For the average male, a two-mile run uses up about 250 calories. A glazed donut has about 250 calories, so you can wipe out all your hard work in just a few bites. Secondly, and perhaps more important, vigorous exercise can sometimes trigger severe hunger. If you are on a healthy eating plan that is helping you lose weight, then add exercise to your regimen—and find that the post-exercise hunger is making you fall off the wagon—cut back on the exercise.

Section 4: Tips for eating out and business travel

When eating out, the most dangerous food is bread. A couple of slices of bread as a starter to a meal will cause a sugar spike followed by an insulin spike, and most of the carbs and fats you eat during the meal are likely to be turned into “stored fat.” Bread comes in many guises: bread, tortillas (flour or corn), bagels, chips, pita bread etc. If you want just one rule for eating out, here it is—before you walk into a restaurant, make yourself a promise: “I will eat no bread!”

Suggestions when eating out:

Mediterranean/Middle Eastern/Greek: Send back the pita bread. Start with a cup of lentil soup or a couple of falafels. For the main course, a Greek salad with feta cheese and grilled chicken or lamb is perfect.

Italian: Send back the rolls. Start with a salad and a cup of minestrone soup. Take your time over these so that the edge is off your hunger. For the main course, choose something with meat and with a limited amount of white flour. If you are having pasta, remember the 1/3rd of a plate rule. Put the extra pasta in a take-out box, or even better, send it back so you do not have access to it. Go crazy on the marinara sauce- it is good for you. Some restaurants will put grilled salmon on the pasta, otherwise a couple of meatballs is fine. Ask the kitchen for some veggies to go with your meal.

Stay away from the pizza, calzones, and Italian subs.

Mexican: Don't eat the chips, and refuse the tortillas up front. Have the fajita plate; it usually comes with veggies. Make a deal with the server—since you are not having the tortillas, could they please double up on the veggies? Have whole beans (not refried). Go easy on the rice.

Chinese: Start with a cup of wonton or egg drop soup if you are not on a salt-restricted diet (if you need to restrict salt you should not be in a Chinese restaurant—period)! You may also be able to find an entrée-size soup on the menu that has lots of veggies along with meat and/or seafood. Otherwise, a steamed entrée is best; moo-goo gai pan is also good. The next choice is any stir-fried food *without sauce*. See if the restaurant will substitute a cup of noodles for the rice; noodles have a lower glycemic index. Stay away from batter-fried fried foods. Check with the waiter if you are not sure about any of the food.

American/steakhouse: Send back the bread! Have a small steak. Nix the spud. Either double up on the veggies, or have regular veggie portion with rice as the starch (the rice serving is likely to be small, unlike a baked potato/mashed potatoes/potatoes au gratin). Mushrooms are also a good choice as the side dish.

Japanese: Avoid the tempura-fried stuff. Avoid the fried rice dishes served by knife-wielding “chefs.” Start with edamame (soy beans – but watch the salt). Then stick with sushi; it does have sticky rice, but the total amount of rice in a sushi roll is not likely to be excessive. Sashimi is even better because it does not have rice.

Indian: Indian restaurant food is oh-so-tasty but very rich. Also, it is such a shame to send back the nan bread! It is almost impossible to eat healthy in an Indian restaurant. Try to stick to the tandoori chicken the sag paneer, lentil vadais, and green veggies such as beans, along with a small serving of the basmati rice. But as a general rule go to an Indian restaurant for taste, not for health.

Fast food: It is hard to find tasty and healthy fast-food. However, many Mexican-themed fast-food places now offer a *burrito bowl*, which has the burrito filling without the wrap. This can be tasty *and* healthy. Go easy on the rice, pick the meat of your choice, double up on the black or pinto beans, and add lots of tomato, lettuce, and other veggies. Throw on some guacamole on top. Delicious!

Suggestions while traveling on business:

Eating health on the road is hard.

Take some food with you. I typically pack two Ezekiel bread egg sandwiches for the day of travel. I eat the first at lunch and the other around 3 PM, usually during the flight. This way, I do not hit an unfamiliar town on an empty stomach—a dangerous combination.

I always request a fridge (not a mini-bar, just a fridge) and a microwave in my room when making a hotel reservation. Even hotels where these are not standard will often oblige if asked ahead of time. I also pack dinner for the first night. If not, I find the nearest Whole Foods or similar store and put together a tasty and filling salad.

Of course, if you are eating out with business associates, just remember rule #1: no bread! Then use the “suggestions for eating out”, above.

For breakfast at the hotel, I have eggs, a little bit of bacon (for taste) and fruit. I avoid bread/waffles/bagels. Having white flour (or too much sugar) is not only unhealthy, it will put you at risk for a hypoglycemic low at 11 AM—not the best feeling if you are doing a business presentation.

It is also a good idea to take mini-packs of twenty almonds or ten walnut halves with you. Keep a couple of packs handy at all times. Make sure you eat something from your snack-pack a half-hour before lunch and dinner—keep your hunger down.

Good luck!