

Tips on Staying Healthy



Reading Labels

A desire to lose weight may be the main reason you pay attention to what you eat. But eating to promote good health should be a consideration as well. Labels can help.

The following terms should be considered as red flags:

Saturated and Trans Fats

When you think of the "bad fats" -- the ones that can hurt your health -- you probably think of the saturated variety. They are the ones that can raise your levels of bad cholesterol, or LDL, as well as your risks of developing serious conditions like heart disease.

Well, you should know that saturated fats have some company in this department: the trans fats.

Health-wise, trans fats strike with a double whammy. They too can raise your levels of bad cholesterol, but they also can *decrease* your HDL, or "good" cholesterol. Together, these two effects are primary risks of developing heart disease, and they are a reason why many experts consider trans fats a bigger bad boy than saturated fat.

What are you supposed to do? For starters, lower the amounts of saturated and trans fats in your daily diet. You can do it by choosing reduced-fat foods, like lower-fat dairy and leaner cuts of beef. (They contain less total fat, less saturated fat, and less trans fats.) Major sources of trans-fatty acids are partially hydrogenated margarine, shortening, commercial frying fats and high fat baked goods.

And, it may not be a popular notion, but making your own meals -- yes, homemade ones -- really help you control how much fat you eat. You get to choose the type and amount of fat in each recipe you prepare. If you make pie crust, biscuits, or waffles, use canola oil instead of shortening and use less cooking fat, in general, whenever possible. It's those smart substitutions that help a lot.

Physical Activity Can Energize Your Life!

There are 1440 minutes in every day... Schedule 30 of them for physical activity. Make physical activity a regular, essential part of your day, just like brushing your teeth or getting dressed. Start slowly and set small goals.

Set a 1-month goal you can reach. For example, plan to walk for 10 minutes at lunch 3 days a week or 30 minutes every other day.

Keep a record of what you do. Circle the days on a calendar when you exercise. If you want a more detailed record, use a notebook to write down your physical activity every day, including informal things like walking an extra block to work and use a step counter to keep track of your steps.

If it helps your motivation, find a workout partner. A buddy can keep you going just by expecting you to show up. On the other hand, you may view a walk or other activity as your time to be alone to plan your day or solve a problem. Whichever you choose, remember you can't change where you came from but you can change where your going.