



Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Have your own reasons for healthier eating

Your reasons for healthy eating are really important. Don't do it just because your spouse, friend, or someone else wants you to eat healthier. What makes you want to change how you eat? Do you:

- Want to feel better and have more energy?
- Want to improve your health?
- Want to prevent or treat health problems, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes?
- Have another reason for wanting to do it?

Whatever your reason, you may already know what areas you want to work on. Maybe you want to cut back on high-fat snacks or eat more high-fibre foods.

If you aren't sure where to start, keeping a food diary can help. For a week or two, write down everything you eat. It will help you see which foods you need to eat more of and which foods you eat too often. Then compare what you are eating to Canada's Food Guide.

Set goals you can reach. Ask yourself if you feel ready to begin taking steps toward big goals. If you're not ready yet, try to pick a date when you will start making small changes. Any healthy change—no matter how small—is a good start.

When you are clear about your reasons for wanting to make a change, it's time to set your goals.

- **Long-term goals:** These are goals that you want to reach in six to 12 months. A long-term goal might be to eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day.
- **Short-term goals:** You may not be ready to eat more vegetables and fruits every day. What are the short-term goals that will help you get there? Your first small goal might be

to eat fruit at breakfast each day. As soon as you've reached that goal, you can set a new one by adding vegetables or fruits to your lunch or dinner. Or you could try eating a piece of fruit as a snack every day.

- Update your goals: It will help you stay motivated if you track your progress and update your goals as you move forward.

Tips for setting goals:

- Focus on small goals. This will help you reach larger goals over time. With smaller goals, you'll have success more often, which will help you stay with it.
- Write down your goals. This will help you remember, and you'll have a clearer idea of what you want to achieve. Make a personal action plan where you can record your goals. Hang up your plan where you will see it often. It will remind you of what you're trying to do.
- Make your goals specific. Specific goals help you measure your progress and adjust your plan. For example, setting a goal to eat vegetables two times each day is better than a general goal to "eat more vegetables."
- Focus on one goal at a time. By doing this, you're less likely to feel overwhelmed and then give up.
- As soon as you reach a goal, set a new one.