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Weight Loss 101: My Food Diary

Dietitians Offer Tips on How to Keep a Food Diary

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A food diary can be a very useful tool for weight loss. Here, nutrition experts offer advice for writing your way to success.

Start Out on the Right Foot: Write it Out

"Target the mind. Write it out. Journal," recommends D. Milton Stokes, MPH, RD, co-author of *Flat Belly Diet! for Men* (Rodale, 2009) and a dietitian in private practice.

"Really dig in there deep and ask, 'Is this it? Is this the time I'm going to change my eating patterns for the better to improve my health?' What's holding you back? Enlist a therapist and a dietitian to coach you. A team approach works wonders."



My Food Diary for Weight Loss
Steve Wisbauer/ Getty Images

Write to Understand Portions

"Food diaries are great for self-policing and recognizing where we need to make changes," observes Audrey Shweky Young, Private nutrition consultant and dietitian at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center Diabetes Center in Boston, MA. "Since our views of appropriate portion sizes have inflated, I always suggest measuring once in awhile to keep portions in check. Even dietitians need to recheck ourselves. Try to use the same bowls and cups; it will be easier to eyeball amounts if these are consistent."

Think Convenience

"Use a diary that is portable and convenient," suggests Julie Woodmansee, MSH, RD dietitian in Louisville, Kentucky.

"Find a diary that you can carry with you to work, keep in your car or purse. It is best to record meals, snacks and portion sizes shortly after eating. If you wait until the end of the day or week to complete you diary, you may underestimate portion sizes or forget to include those few bites of cake you had after lunch."

Record More Than Just Foods

"Rate your hunger level and list your emotions (i.e. sad, happy, frustrated, stressed) for meals and snacks," adds Woodmansee. "This will help you identify eating triggers and patterns. Are you eating because you are truly hungry or did you have a stressful day at work?"

Get the Most Out of Your Record

"Be honest," notes Woodmansee. "Don't be afraid of what your doctor, dietitian or family might think of what you recorded. Honesty will only help increase your chances of meeting your goals."

Sources:

Personal Interview: D. Milton Stokes, 3/17/11

Personal Interview: Audrey Shewky Young, 3/17/11

3Personal Interview: Julie Woodmansee, 3/17/11

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