

DISCLAIMER: Note that the contents here are not presented from a medical practitioner, and that any and all health care planning should be made under the guidance of your own medical and health practitioners. The content within only presents an overview based upon research for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice from a practicing physician. Further, the information in this manual is provided "as is" and without warranties of any kind either express or implied. Under no circumstances, including, but not limited to, negligence, shall the seller/distributor of this information be liable for any special or consequential damages that result from the use of, or the inability to use, the information presented here. Thank you.

The Perfect Diet for You

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INTRODUCTION

Arriving at the Perfect Diet is no quick, simple task in today's world of fast-paced living. For example, there are a several different educational food pyramid plans. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a food guide pyramid. And the Mayo Clinic, in conjunction with the May Foundation for Medical Education and Research, has their Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Pyramid. (A list of pyramids are updated regularly at the USDA site: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html> .)

Then there are the lifestyle choices to go along with the dietary plans. Lives need to be balanced in order to make the perfect diet effective. For example, depending upon the body type, history, physical and mental make up and other factors, some dietary solutions are more perfectly suitable and / or adaptable than others when working in accordance with day-to-day activities; exercise, nutrition, health, etc.

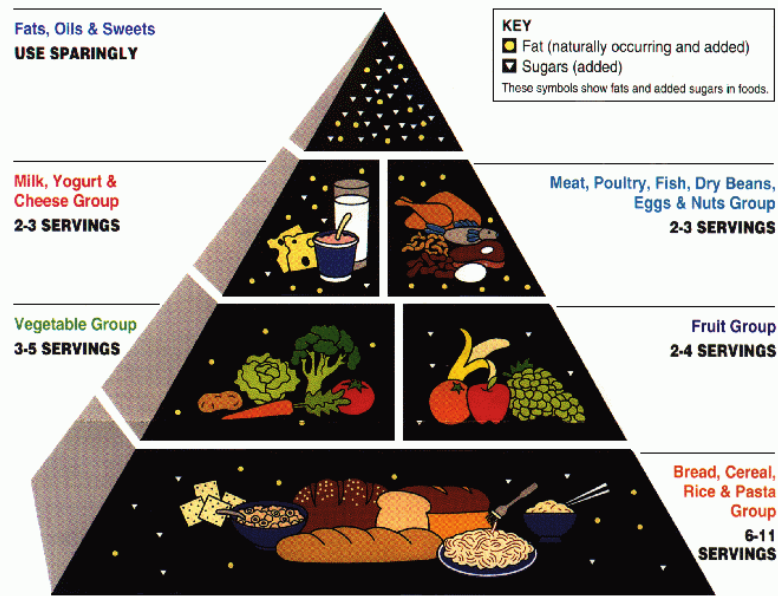
What this report covers is an overall look at what makes up a "perfect" diet, covering all the bases. You will learn about foods with respect to nutrition, dietary and body basics and common disorders. Then you can choose which areas of importance you would like to focus on from subscriber and other organizational programs available today for help with diet solutions, to weight products, to an assortment of food planning tips, and more.

Note that the contents here are not presented from a medical practitioner, and that any and all dietary planning should be made under the guidance of your own medical practitioners. This content only presents overviews of dietary research for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice from a professional physician.

NUTRITION & DIETARY BASICS

In a nutshell, the USDA Food Guide Pyramid presents a general outline of which foods to eat daily. And it is based on the Dietary Guidelines presented by the USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Pyramid recommends eating a variety of foods in order to get the nutrients and calories needed for healthy weight maintenance.



The bottom foundation of the pyramid is a recommendation for 6-11 servings of breads, pasta, rice and cereals. The actual breakdown is:

- For children (ages 2 to 6 years), women, some older adults (around 1,600 calories) - 6 servings
- For older children, teen girls, active women, most men (around 2,200 calories) – 9 servings

- Teen boys, active men (around 2,800 calories) - 11 servings.

A serving of breads, pasta, rice and cereals would basically reflect the following: 1 slice of bread, 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal; and 1/2 cup of cooked of pasta, rice or cereal.

The next pyramid layer building upwards represents fruits and vegetables. From 2-4 fruits are advised a day and 3-5 vegetables. The actual breakdown is:

- For children (ages 2 to 6 years), women, some older adults (around 1,600 calories) - 3 servings of vegetables, 2 of fruit
- For older children, teen girls, active women, most men (around 2,200 calories) – 4 servings of vegetables, 3 of fruit
- Teen boys, active men (around 2,800 calories) - 5 servings of vegetables, 4 of fruit

A serving of fruits and vegetables would basically reflect the following:

1 medium-sized fruit such as an apple, orange or a banana; 1/2 cup of chopped, canned or cooked fruit; or three-fourths (3/4) cup of fruit juice. For vegetables, a serving would be: a half (1/2) cup of raw, chopped or cooked vegetables, except for raw, leafy ones that get 1 cup per serving; or 3/4 cup of vegetable juice.

On up the pyramid is the Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group also known as (AKA) the Milk Group, which includes lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk products. And the Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts Group AKA Meat and Beans Group runs along side. From 2-3 servings of the Milk Group and 2-3 servings of the Meat and Beans Group are recommended. The actual breakdown is:

- For children (ages 2 to 6 years), women, some older adults (around 1,600 calories) – 2 or 3 servings Milk Group, 2 servings for a total of 5 ounces of Meat and Beans Group
- For older children, teen girls, active women, most men (around 2,200 calories) – 2 or 3 servings Milk Group, 2 servings for a total of 6 ounces of Meat and Beans Group

- Teen boys, active men (around 2,800 calories) - 2 or 3 servings Milk Group, 3 servings for a total of 7 ounces of Meat and Beans Group

A serving of both groups would basically reflect the following. For the Milk Group, choose from 1 cup of yogurt or milk, 1.5 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese. And for the Meat and Beans Group, 2-3 ounces of cooked lean meat, fish or poultry; 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans; 1/2 cup of tofu; 2 .5 -ounce soyburger; 1 egg ; 2 tablespoons of peanut butter; or 1/3 cup of nuts.

At the top of the pyramid is the group of fats, oils and sweets. And all should be “used sparingly.”

Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Pyramid

The Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Pyramid doesn't differ too much from the USDA Pyramid. It is based upon scientific research and patient healthcare as reported by medical practitioners and dietitians of the Mayo Clinic, and by weight-loss experts at Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The Pyramid was crafted threefold; to encourage weight loss, weight maintenance and long-term health.

Let's take a brief look at the Pyramid differences. The bottom two levels or the Bread Group – now referred to as Carbohydrates, and the Fruits and Vegetables Group, are reversed, resulting in the Fruits and Vegetables Group now being at the bottom level. Also servings for Fruits and Vegetables are unlimited here. And calories are counted throughout.

In a nutshell, to plan the perfect Mayo Clinic diet, a person would follow these 5 steps, as approved by his or her healthcare practitioner:

1. Calories – Establish a calorie level that's right for you based upon your

- physician's advice.
2. Servings - Determine the number of recommended servings for each food group.
 3. Serving Size – learn the preferred portions for #2 above.
 4. Record – log & monitor your progress.
 5. Variety – Main success ingredient! Vary sensual appeal and tastes.

For more details on this Pyramid, contact:

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BASIC WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

The perfect diet should be combined with a healthy weight management or activity program. Weight management may conjure up that dreaded “exercise” word. And exercise to some means pushing the body beyond limits, experiencing painful in joints, muscles, bones – everywhere. No pain no gain, right? Wrong. Instead, replace the word “exercise” with “activity” and incorporate this in your daily routine. And a general rule of thumb for guidelines about “activity” would be to strive for a minimum of 30 minutes for adults or 60 minutes for children of moderate physical activity daily.

Individual activity goals depend upon each person's health and weight goals and issues. Begin by checking with your medical advisor or healthcare physician to get a green light on which activities would be suitable for you, what your target weight range should be and a strategic plan to improve your health.

In a nutshell, during activities, calories are burned, pounds are shed in the long run.

And the number of calories burned depends upon the duration and intensity of the activity. Slow and steady is the rule of thumb. And note daily progress. For those who have never been very active at all, it may be advisable to begin slow like with walking 10 minutes each day, gradually building up time and distance with increased “brisk” pacing. Even if you can’t get out to walk, bike or swim, take stairs instead of elevators and escalators. Clean your house. Clean your car. Wash windows. Wash your dog. Check out exercise videos, cassettes and workout books from the public library and put some of their ideas into action. Check out your local fitness centers, YMCA, community center, too, for ideas. Partner up with a neighbor to walk or join a community volleyball team. There are unlimited ways to be active and enjoy life at the same time without using painful weight loss strategies.

OVERALL FOOD HEALTH VALUES

Now let’s take a look at the basic food elements in your perfect dietary plan; fruits and vegetables group, bread, cereals, rice and pasta groups, meats and beans group and dairy group. Each has different characteristics or helpful nutritional value for your dietary needs.

Fruits and Vegetables – Fruits have very little if any protein and fat. Instead, they have carbohydrates, generally fruit sugar or fructose and glucose. As Florida commercials tend to announce, fruits offer us vitamins, C and B to be exact, as well as potassium, fiber and other nutrients. While the sugar helps with maintaining blood sugar levels, vitamins and other nutrients help ward off sickness and disease, and fiber is important for waste disposal from the body.

Here is a peek at some fruits and their relationship to the perfect diet.

Apples – These help cleanse the system and aid lungs, and have been used as laxatives, for fainting, melancholy and palpitations. Apples have been known to help people with diabetes, heart disease, cancer and high cholesterol trouble.

Apricots – These offer beta carotene and potassium. They aid in adding moisture to the body, especially the breathing and throat areas. Apricots have been known to help fight cancer and high blood pressure, prevent night blindness, aid those with stomach and lung cancers, low energy and elderly with mental depression.

Bananas – These have been noted to help with intestinal and lung problems, ulcers and constipation, mental alertness, and increasing energy. They also help people with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease risk, blood sugar level maintenance, and the elderly with confusion.

Berries – A variety of berries has been noted to help with varicose veins, menstrual problems, premature graying, joint ailments, insomnia, liver, spleen and pancreas problems. They also help reduce cancer risk and aid with rheumatoid arthritic solutions, weight loss issues, stomach and colon cancers.

Citrus Fruits – Oranges, tangerines, kumquats, lemons, limes - -help with stomach and colon trouble and with anemia and infections (like scurvy) and colds. They are also help people with cataracts and the prevention of colon and stomach cancers.

Figs – These work as laxatives and have been known to help with the treatment of boils and anemia reduction, and the prevention of osteoporosis.

Grapes – Grapes are associated with cleansing the body and to help with water retention, urinary issues, jaundice and hepatitis. They are also associated with the healing of rheumatoid arthritis and aid with mental confusion / depression, especially among the

elderly.

Mangos – Mangos are noted to aid in the prevention of anemia and the strengthening of the immune system. They also have been used to help with fighting off infections and tumors and the prevention of cervical cancer. And they help with the heal of diarrhea, sweating and mental alertness.

Papayas – This is a great source for vitamin C and is also noted for helping with male fertility, with aiding white blood cells among the elderly, with intestinal treatments and with cancer prevention.

Pears – Pears have similar characteristics as apples. They provide moisture for the body, are slow to digest and have fairly little allergic responses reported. They have also been used to help with coughing, diabetes, cholesterol levels, dryness in the chest cavity, skin injuries, introducing babies to food, staving off hunger and boosting brain power.

Pineapples – Their juice helps with digestion, dissolving blood clots (related to thrombosis) and healing wounds. They have been known to help with cancer prevention.

Prunes – Help with iron deficiency and constipation. Prune puree can act as a substitute in dietary cooking to lighten the fat low, working in place of butter and margarine.

Now let's look at some veggies. Again low in calories, vegetables are also high in fiber content, vitamins and minerals, with little to zero protein and fats. Check and see how some veggies affect your perfect diet.

Artichoke – Artichokes have been known to aid liver disease, kidneys and gallbladders. They also help with large intestinal problems, skin and bowel cancer prevention, high cholesterol and hepatitis.

Asparagus – Great source of some vitamin B, this veggie helps with water retention with

regards to kidneys and menstrual issues, cataracts and lung problems (some bronchitis, tuberculosis).

Avocado – Great source for vitamins E and some Bs and oil, avocados help with the immune systems in elderly people. They also aid the liver, lungs and intestines (ulcer treatments), infertility in men and Parkinson’s Disease.

Broccoli – This has been noted to help with anemia, eye disorders like near-sightedness, and infections, especially childhood ones like measles. Broccoli has also been known to help counteract the effects of cigarette smoke and aid in many types of cancer prevention.

Cabbage – Cabbage has been used to help with lung and digestive disorders, ulcers, wounds, joints, mastitis and acne. It has been reported to help with breast and prostate cancers, bacterial infections and heart disease prevention.

Celery – This is helpful for those with high blood pressure, for those with rheumatoid arthritis and for calming, not only with the liver but with stress and anxiety as well.

Celery is also used to help with stomach, pancreas and spleen troubles, acne and canker sores, burning urine and eye inflammation.

Legumes – These seed pod products help with the reduction of heart disease risk and help with the healing of some cancers, blood sugar level maintenance and iron / calcium maintenance in the body. They also aid people with anemia and diabetes.

Mushrooms – These help white blood cells in the immune system, help fight some cancers and heart disease and may help in the prevention of clotting, by blood thinning.

Onions – They have helped with heart disease prevention, bladder (and other) cancer, and circulatory problems. They have also helped in healing swelling from bug bites and bronchial inflammations. And onion tea is said to have sedative qualities.

Potatoes / Other Roots – These root veggies are associated with the prevention of different cancers, the prevention of blood clotting related with heart disease, and with protection against inhaled nicotine (via smokers). Carrots further aid in stomach and lung cancer care, food poisoning healing, iron deficiency, sexual problems and night blindness. While beets help reduce heart disease risk and spina bifida (with pregnant women). And they help with high blood pressure care and muscle replenishing.

Pumpkins / Squash – These have been known to help with the prevention of prostate cancer and the reduction of heart disease risk. They also aid in healing cataracts / retinal and lens damage in the eye and with the flu and colds.

Soybeans – These help with osteoporosis risk reduction, lowering blood cholesterol levels, and prostate and breast cancer reduction and prevention. Soybeans have also been known for helping the spleen, blood and pancreas, and increasing milk production in breast-feeding women.

Tomatoes – These help in the reduction of heart disease, the healing of prostate and other cancers, and with the aging (both mentally and physically) process.

Bread, Cereals, Rice and Pasta – Cereals are considered staple foods. Depending upon the country, weather, region, etc., popular varieties vary; corn, barley, oats, wheat, rice, millet. Grains mainly give the body carbohydrates (mostly starches), some fiber, protein, vitamins (mainly Bs and E) and minerals. Here is a peek at some foods in this category.

Bread – This major energy source offers the body lots of nutrition, protein, calcium, iron and B vitamins. Breads help reduce risk of infertility in men, anemia, heart and spine problems, osteoporosis and colon cancer risk. Historically, bread was prescribed as nature's way to aid in colonic irrigation.

Corn – Corn may be able to help with spina bifida risk in babies. It helps with heart disease and colon cancer prevention. Popped corn can be a great diet food, depending upon the oil and additives (like butter) used. Corn silks have been used in diuretic teas to help with high blood pressure, gallstones, kidney stones, water retention, and urinary problems.

Oats – Oats are known to help with skin problems and in the treatment of depression, anxiety and insomnia. The saponins, B vitamins and alkaloids in oats aid with mood-lifting. Some forms of oats also work as antiseptic and heart disease treatments, help lower blood pressure and with weight reduction (cause full feeling and digest slowly) and are popular on diabetic menus.

Rice – Rice has been used for the healing of depression, for reducing colon cancer risk, for reducing cholesterol levels and blood pressure. It offers quick energy for the body, helps calm the stomach, is good for poor digestion and diarrhea, and helps fight celiac disease. Rice cakes are great substitutions for dieters, replacing breads.

Wheat - This traditional kidney toner help with the reduction and prevention of colon and breast cancer, blocking of the arteries and heart disease. Wheat also aids in mental functions including focus and calmness. Many pastas are made from wheat and in this category. They offer carbohydrates, fiber and B vitamins to the body.

Meats and Fish - Meats are a source of protein and iron. Mainly fat content needs to be of concern with regards to perfect dietary planning. And leaner meats are becoming more readily available; lean hamburger, buffalo, emu and ostrich. Fish, also good protein sources, help reduce heart disease risk, inflammation and blood clotting.

Fish – Oily fish have been known to help with bone density, to relieve psoriasis and

rheumatoid arthritic pain, and help prevent heart disease and anemia. Shellfish helps with male fertility, brittle bones, weak muscles, weight loss and the prevention of cancer.

Meats – Aid male fertility, build body tissue, nervous system damage and maintenance and help with the prevention of anemia and osteoporosis.

Gamebirds / Poultry – These foods help enhance concentration and mood. They also aid in the prevention of anemia and depression. And for those with allergies, turkey and chicken are noted at rarely causing allergic reactions.

Dairy – Dairy products help in the prevention of tooth decay, protein deficiency, loss of energy, high blood pressure, bone fractures, osteoporosis, rickets and some cancers including colon.

A-Z COMMON HEALTH DISORDERS & THEIR DIETARY SOLUTIONS

Depending upon individual health concerns and issues, food choices can affect body and mental health. To focus on improving and strengthening your overall health and well being, here are common health concerns for both genders listed in alphabetical order and the foods that would work best in individual perfect dietary planning. For more details, check with your own healthcare providers and refer to, “Doctor, What Should I Eat?” by Isadore Rosenfeld, M.D. (Warner Books, Inc., 1995).

ACNE – To help fight acne problems, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and cereals. Lay low on sweets (especially chocolate), fried foods, fats, carbonated beverages, nuts / peanut butter and dairy products.

AGING – Watch intake of foods high in caloric content. Focus on complex carbohydrates, calcium to fight off osteoporosis and minimize fat and protein consumption. Men on average over age 50 only need around 63 grams of protein a day;

women need 50 grams. Calorie-wise, men need to decrease overall daily calorie totals by about 600; women 300 calories per day.

AIRSICKNESS – Put nutmeg under your tongue.

ALLERGIES – Drink infusion of wild thyme, take garlic capsules or chew peeled garlic cloves, or drink mineral salt teas like sage tea or nettle tea. And for seasonal allergies, lay low on breads (especially white), rice and pasta.

ANXIETY – The old standby cup of warm milk and honey soothes jagged nerves. Mix in a little cinnamon and / or nutmeg. Chamomile and Valerian teas are helpful, too.

ARTHRITIS – Garlic capsules and peeled garlic can help here. So can fish oil capsules and fish each day in your dietary planning. And drinking a glass of water a few times each day with a small amounts of apple cider vinegar and honey added are beneficial.

Lemonade without sugar helps with rheumatic arthritis. Other aids: wild thyme, celery seed and honeysuckle teas and primrose leaves added to salads.

ASTHMA – Some foods to help are hot chili peppers, fresh garlic, onions, chili, water with Tabasco sauce, coffee (regular, not decaffeinated). Seafoods that are helpful include crab, clams, shellfish, oysters, mussels, salmon, sardines, mackerel and haddock.

Grandmas chicken soup works wonders, too. Carbohydrates and fruits need to especially be included in the diet. And frozen yogurt, graham crackers and fruit juices are good snacks.

BAD BREATH – Brushing teeth with baking soda and water can help eliminate bad breath. Chewing parsley, mint leaves or dill seeds after eating helps, too.

CANCER – Lay low on fats. Eat plenty of yellow and green vegetables and fruits (for vitamin C and beta carotene); spinach, winter squash, peaches, cantaloupe, apricots,

broccoli, tomatoes, yams, carrots, cabbage, brussels sprouts. Choose low-fat dairy products, leaner meats, plenty of water and high-fiber foods like whole-grain flours and breads. Include macaroni, chickpeas, popcorn, baked potato, pita bread, brown rice. For specific cancers and food choices to target for them, refer to, "Doctor What Should I eat?" by Isadore Rosenfeld, MD. (Warner Books, Inc., 1995).

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME – Foods with vitamin B6 can help; oatmeal, sunflower seeds, liver, wheat germ, bananas, rice bran, meat, fish, chicken, avocados. And eat foods with vitamin B12; fish, liver, eggs, cheese, muscle meats and shellfish.

CATARACTS – Eat plenty of vitamin C; fruits and fruit juices, leafy green vegetables. Also add small amounts of vitamin A foods; milk, eggs, liver; and beta-carotenes; orange, yellow and red fruits and vegetables.

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME – Add some extra protein; skinless chicken, turkey, fish, egg whites, fresh vegetables and fruits and low-fat dairy products. Eat complex carbs like potatoes, pasta and whole grains. Natural fish sources are also good choices; tuna, salmon, whitefish, mackerel, herring, anchovies, bluefish.

COMMON COLD – These foods are helpful for fighting colds: grapefruit and other fruit juices and sections, garlic, horseradish, zinc lozenges, slippery elm tea and other vitamin C foods; broccoli, kale, potatoes and tomatoes.

CONSTIPATION – Remedies include cod liver oil, dandelion coffee, fresh fruits and vegetables, parsley, warm water, and slippery elm tea.

COUGHING – Drink warm, unsalted water in which potatoes were boiled. Or try warm milk with molasses and nutmeg added.

CRAMPS – Potassium-rich foods help – bananas!

DIARRHEA – Include in your diet: warm milk, sweet potatoes and RAB (rice, apple sauce and bananas).

FLU – Healthy food choices include grapefruit and garlic and beef broth.

GALLSTONES – Ease up on fats and refined sugars, eat more fiber; fresh fruits and vegetables (steamed veggies, too). Clear liquids are best; apple juice, broth, gelatin, 7-Up. Also include whole grains cereals, pastas and breads like pumpernickel and wheat rye, popcorn, wheat crackers and add oat bran in recipes. Lean meats and low-fat dairy products are recommended.

GOUT – Go light in the protein end and drink lots of fluids. Avoid foods with high purine content; animal organs, some shellfish and seafood (herring, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, roe, mussels, scallops) and gravy. Skip alcohol consumption. Eat carbohydrates like rice, pasta, fruits, vegetables and potatoes.

HEADACHES – Almonds are good for pain relief. So if Gatorade and ginger.

HEART TROUBLE – Onions and tarragon are good choices. Also skip alcohol consumption; go low of caffeine and no smoking.

HEMORRHOIDS – Increase the fiber in your diet- - slow-and-steady. And drink lots of fluids. Food choices are wheat bran, whole grain cereals, vegetables, apples, berries, prunes, figs, dates, beans, lentils and peas.

HIC-CUPS – Drink water and then eat some bread. Other “cures” are a teaspoon of honey or slowly drinking a glass of ice water covered with a paper towel (and drinking it through the paper towel).

INDIGESTION – For stomach trouble, try a teaspoon of baking soda in a glass of warm water. Other food choices are eating cucumbers or apples with their peels on, bay leaves,

parsley, watercress, fresh pineapple, raw carrots, grated horseradish and herbal teas: chamomile, peppermint, dill, rosemary. Lemon in coffee and mint tea with honey also help.

INSOMNIA – Eat a boiled onion before going to sleep.

MENOPAUSE – Keep going with the calcium, ladies. Go light now on coffee, tea, salt, proteins. Better are decaffeinated beverages, herbal teas, herbs instead of salt like garlic, onion and lemon. Chose lean cuts and lower-fat dairy products, whole grains, bran, fresh fruits, vegetables, lentils.

MORNING SICKNESS – Before bed, eat a healthy fruit or vegetable that is difficult to digest, like a carrot or apple with the skin on, or celery.

OSTEOPOROSIS – Go low on the caffeine, salt and tobacco. And choose decaffeinated beverages and herbal teas. Instead of salt, use onion, garlic or lemon seasoning. Up your calcium / low-fat dairy intake; yogurt, cheese, milk, soy milk, tofu, shellfish, sardines, salmon, oysters, dark green vegetables (not spinach); cabbage, collards, broccoli.

STOMACH ACHE / UPSET– Warm cinnamon tea, hot mint tea, herbal peppermint tea or ginger spiced tea will help.

STRESS – Combination of drinking water, relax / exercise first. Later – slowly eat small amount of healthy foods – fruits, veggies.

URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS – Cranberry juice or barley water can help.

SUBSCRIBER PROGRAMS

There are many subscriber programs available both online and in the real world for dieters. In order to help choose one or just learn more about them in order to help round out your daily life and coordinate your activities, foods - - i.e. perfect diet lifestyle,

here are some of the membership programs available.

South Beach Diet – Online at www.southbeachdiet.com , the South Beach Diet , developed by a cardiologist named Dr. Arthur Agatston, boasts being not about low-fat or low-carb. But rather they teach you about the right carbs and the right fats. Subscribers receive daily tips, recipes, guidance from Dr. Agatston, tips to stay on track, and tools to track your dietary goals, weight and progress track, and program phase. They also receive nutritional tools and a meal planner and scheduler to log daily meals and plan for meals up to a week ahead.

A handy online Shopping List Generator is also available for members for quickly and automatically creating and printing out lists. And message boards and a journal are also handy subscriber tools. Through posts, dieters and share recipes, motivation, advice, success and failure stories and support one another. And they can journal via online progress diary entries and read how their fellow members are doing.

eDiets - - Online at www.ediets.com , eDiets offers a wide range of dietary planning by combining well known company program options (like Atkins and Slim Fast) and others- including their own - and personalizing the delivered end product or comprehensive diet plans right to you. They feature email, ezine news, helpful articles, recipes, menus and tips.

eDiets also offers options. You can add an online personal trainer package with community boards, customizable fitness planning, live support, mentors, chats and experts to help you along. The virtual trainer shows step-by-step exercise routines so that you can watch on your computer screen and then copy the movements in the privacy of your own home or office. And the package can be tailored personal fitness goals, health

issues and exercise preferences. You can also opt to add an online anytime-meetings 24/7 package with reviews of the latest nutritional products on the market. Or you can opt to add a recipe club package with over 2,000 recipes, grocery list aids, recipe finder and other dietary planning solutions.

Mix and match, upgrade or downgrade options at any time. They focus on offering a combined health, nutritional and lifestyle for helping with the perfect diet plan.

Atkins – Atkins offers a paid subscription program, customized through eDiets.com above. And they offer a no-cost version with less features through their website at <https://atkins.com/myatkins/index.html> . Their free version features a personal journaling section, recipe box, shopping list and file cabinet. Set health and fitness goals in your journal and monitor your progress. Have a handy place to keep your recipes. As you need to buy ingredients, simply click and add them to your shopping list. Save favorite tips, articles, Atkins information and more in their file cabinet area.

Slimfast – Similar to Atkins, Slimfast offers a paid subscription program that is customized through eDiets.com. And they offer a no-cost version through their website at <http://www.slim-fast.com/membership.asp> . Some of the goodies offered for free membership are individualized meal plans, personalized fitness program, food & exercise journals, weight charts, automatic notification of promotion & coupon offers, shopping lists, buddy program, “Ask a Dietitian,” live chats, success stories, a regular newsletter and a Body Mass Index (BMI) calculator that uses height and body weight factors.

Weight Watchers – Online at www.weightwatchers.com , Weight Watchers offers a few choices. They have a couple different food plans; monitor points or simply go with food choices. Then opt for a real-world membership with weekly meetings where you learn

about healthy food choices and activities, hear inspirational leaders/ speakers, pick up tips and program information, recipes and menus and have confidential weigh-ins. How meetings work is that you attend once a week for about an hour from a huge list hosted all over. You pay a small fee when you attend (beginning around \$9 - \$10 per week with special packages / plans available, depending upon the area). Find a meeting place online by entering your zip code or call 800-282-8908 (24/7).

Or opt for cyber-planning with Weight Watchers online tools. For a little less money per month, around \$5 per week, you get recipe and meal ideas in a click, a points tracker and calendar, progress charts, restaurant guide and other resources. And connect with their online community 24/7 instead of driving around town juggling meetings in your schedule.

Jenny Craig – Available online at www.jennycraig.com for around \$11 a month (or choose package deals). Online they feature eTools, a new product that is tailored to go hand-in-hand with the original real-world Jenny Craig Program. You can purchase foods from them or use their recipes / cookbooks. With the eTools, member also receive an online journal, they can track and mark off meals from daily menus, monitor exercises / activities, calculate number of calories burned, include your feelings about your weight loss. These eTools also offer access to plan and print an unlimited number of Menu Plans. There is also a Recipe Box with additional Jenny Craig recipes from their quarterly cookbooks. There are free message boards available for all members (eTools or not). Some may offer “member-only sections” in the future. For programs in your area and pricing information, call: 800-597-JENNY.

The Weight Down Workshop – Gwen Shamblin’s Bible-based weight loss program is

online at www.wdworkshop.com . Not a diet plan, the Weigh Down Workshop does not incur costs for consultants, foods or exercise plans. One program, “Exodus Out of Egypt” costs around \$118 in fees (plus \$7 for shipping and handling) that include your attendance at 12 weeks of class lessons, plus a set of 12 audiocassettes with workbook, access to toll-free advice, encouragement and help. The program teaches you to spend and eat less of regular foods you find about anywhere. Find a real-world workshop by completing an online form or by calling their toll-free number: 888-829-7500. For online support, information, packages and payment information, call them toll-free: (888) 751-5767. They have several plans available and people have to call to get descriptions and pricing.

ORGANIZATIONS

Losing and maintaining weight is a difficult and intimately personal struggle, but it’s not one that anyone needs to go through alone. There are literally millions of people forging their own paths to their better selves, and together, they offer support, advice, and inspiration to one another.

The Twelve Steps

Most recovery programs, including many for food and weight-loss related support, are based on the Twelve Steps. Despite inherent religious references, Twelve Step groups welcome members of all faiths, or even none at all. Roughly, these steps are, following the tradition of **Compulsive Eaters Anonymous** (described more below) :

1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive eaters, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Compulsive Eaters Anonymous HOW (CEA-HOW)

For those struggling with overeating, CEA-HOW offers support and guidance to help you to end your battle with food. By adopting the Twelve Steps, members encourage and remind one another to focus on their goals and use the tools of the group to gain strength. Focus not on negative issues, but rather on sharing recovery feedback and stories and discussing the weighing and measuring three healthy meals per day with no snacking in-between, and relies largely on a phone tree for support. They offer both in-person and online support groups with no dues or fees around the world. The group is self-supported

through contributions. And their online meetings host chats, scheduled at various times to meet many needs. Some literature is available for free download. In all, the program reaches out to focus on three main areas; spiritual, physical, emotional. More information can be found at <http://www.ceahow.org> .

Eating Addictions Anonymous/SANE (EAA/SANE)

Eating Addictions Anonymous helps people dealing with a wide range of body image disorders, ranging from anorexics to bulimics to compulsive overeaters and everyone in-between. They stress that a spiritual, holistic approach is absolutely necessary to overcoming this disease, and pledge, using their 12-steps, to spend each day refraining from using food as a drug-type alternative and addressing body image issues. In addition to the Twelve Steps, the group focuses on the SANE philosophy or method—Spiritual Surrender, Absolute Commitment, Necessary Action and Emotional Healing. There are no fees or dues. For locations near you, contact Eating Addictions Anonymous, General Service Office, PO Box 8151, Silver Spring , MD 20907-8151. USA Telephone: (202) 882-6528. For more information, visit <http://www.eatingaddictionsanonymous.org> .

Eating Disorders Anonymous (EDA)

The only requirement for joining Eating Disorders Anonymous is a desire to end one's struggle with an eating disorder. Their goal is balance, not abstinence. This self-supporting agency has no fees, dues or food plans. They invite people with disorders of all types and severity come together to find common ground and reach common goals. The group stresses that one can end an eating disorder with the right support and the right steps. Members are empowered to see past food and begin living with the ability to see and make alternate choices. Find a meeting location online or email:

info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org . For more information, recovery stories downloadable at no-charge in Microsoft Word format, pdf brochures, and more, visit <http://www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org> .

Food Addicts Anonymous (FAA)

Food Addicts Anonymous relies on the Twelve Steps and a food plan (not a diet) to conquer addictions to food, specifically sugar, flour and wheat. Fats and high-carbohydrate refined, processed foods are also on their watch list, eliminating bingeing, cravings and shame. Instead, members focus on progress a single day at a time and are empowered with the understanding that being addicted to food is like a chemical dependency; as with any other drug, the only way to fight the addiction is to stop ingesting the chemical. There are no special foods to buy; simple, regular grocery store food is used. There are over 150 FAA chapters around the world to join. For more information, meeting locations and times, chatroom meetings, the Online Loop (a Yahoo email-based daily communication network) and more, visit <http://www.foodaddictsanonymous.org> .

Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA)

With membership open to anyone of any age experiencing difficulty with food-related issues, including anorexia, bulimia and overeating, Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous offers stability and support to those in need. It is based upon the 12-Steps. With frequent meetings, no dues, fees or weigh-ins, a warm and caring community is built where members find the strength they need to end their harmful addiction to food and achieve and maintain a healthy weight. For more information, location and times of meetings in your area, inexpensive pamphlets for purchase and more, visit

<http://www.foodaddicts.org> .

National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA)

Working to fight against discrimination against fat people, the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance offers literature, support and guidance to all its members. They publish a newsletter, write articles, run action campaigns, and host events and conferences, all with the goal of empowering the heavysset person to embrace and love themselves as they are. Within NAAFA are multiple support groups, including separate meetings for children, men, women, diabetics, and more. Annual dues are required. For additional information, resources, event dates, brochures, local chapters, Persons with Disabilities Law Center and more by clicking on <http://www.naafa.org> or contact them at: NAAFA, Inc., PO Box 188620, Sacramento, CA 95818. Call: (916) 558-6880.

Overeaters Anonymous (OA)

Similar to groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Overeaters Anonymous offers group support for anyone struggling with a variety of weight-related difficulties. It utilizes the Twelve Steps to empower members to overcome their problems and begin changing their lives for the better, with over 1500 chapters internationally.

Participants in OA experience a wide range of problems associated with food and their weight. An obsession with food, weight, and/or physical appearance is generally shared by all members in some form. Some are binge eaters, some are compulsive exercisers, and some are anorexics. Still others are diet pill addicts, bulimic, and/or so engulfed in yo-yo dieting that they are putting their life at risk.

There is no membership roster, no participation requirement, and no associated cost. Small donations are often sought at meetings to help meet costs, however. You never have to share your name or any personal identifying information about yourself. For more information, visit <http://www overeatersanonymous.org> .

Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS)

Taking Off Pounds Sensibly is a group similar to Overeaters Anonymous and other Anonymous groups, TOPS has over 10,000 chapters in the United States alone. Through frequent support groups, private weigh-ins, and positive energy, its members are encouraged—and encourage one another—to lose weight safely and sensibly, and keep it off. The group sells a Nutrition and Fitness software application on a CD that runs on Windows for around \$40. It helps track and analyze foods and exercises for up to two users. And it boasts a database of 18,000+ food items from the USDA Database for Standard Reference, 9,000+ Brand Name foods and information featuring 3,200+ restaurant menu items, including many from the most popular national chains. It also has the ability to track up to 88 nutrient factors, including 37 vitamins and minerals. Annual membership dues are required, around \$20 US, \$25 Canada, plus 50-cents - \$1 per week for chapter dues. Membership includes receiving a monthly print 40-page magazine filled with inspirational stories, healthy recipes and news from TOPS chapters around the world mailed to your postal address. The group sites these statistics on their website:

Current Obesity Statistics: (Source: Centers for Disease Control)

- 61% of adults in the U.S. are considered overweight; 26% are considered obese.
- The percentage of children and adolescents who are overweight has doubled in the last 30 years.

- Each year, 300,000 deaths are attributable to poor diet and inactivity.
- Health care costs related to an unhealthy weight and sedentary lifestyle are more than \$117 billion annually.

For more information, success stories, online ecards to mail others for encouragement, message board, online members area, chat room and more visit <http://www.tops.org> .

COOKING TIPS

Here are some cooking tips to help with your perfect dietary planning:

Low-Fat Supplies - -Keep these on hand. Butter-flavored low-fat vegetable cooking sprays are out there. So is apple sauce in place of some oil in recipes. Also keep the following handy: lemons, limes, your favorite fresh herbs and spices, evaporated skim milk, cornstarch, plain non-fat yogurt, flavored vinegar, and onions.

Substitute – Check recipes and ingredients and where applicable, cut fat and calories by using:

- Fat-free or reduced-calorie versions
- Skim milk, 1 percent or 2 percent milk for whole milk

Cooking Skills - - Hone in on or learn how to:

- Sauté, as with vegetables in water or broths.
- Use cooking sprays or nonstick cookware.
- Cook in foil or parchment paper to seal in juicy flavors
- Trim fat from meats
- Stir-fry, bake, roast, poach, microwave, steam and broil
- Experiment with seasonings (herbs, spices)

CONVENIENCE FOOD TIPS

While it would be ideal to make all of our own snacks and meals from scratch everyday, the plain and simple truth is that most of us simply don't have that kind of time. This is where we turn to convenience foods to meet our dietary and weight loss needs. However, the right convenience foods in the right amounts can easily be integrated into almost any diet.

Shop Smart - Never shop on an empty stomach. This will only make it harder for you to make choices that are in your best interests. Always be prepared with a thorough shopping list and do not divert from it. If an aisle is full of tempting goodies but has nothing on your list, simply walk right by it, instead of down it. If you see something healthy that you would like, but it's not on your list, jot it down and add it to the list next time. This will provide you with something to look forward to.

Reach for the smaller bags and boxes of what you need when possible. The less food you have leftover in your kitchen translates into less temptation.

Read Labels - All convenience foods are not the same. Depending on your chosen diet, some will fit much better into your routine than others. This is why it's important to become an informed consumer and never place anything in your grocery basket unless you've read the label and determined it's in your best interests to buy it.

Many snack foods come in different versions—low fat, reduced fat, low calorie, low carbohydrate, low salt, etc. Choose the variety that best fits your dieting needs.

Remember that different labels can mean entirely different things. The following list may help you discern between them:

No calorie: Less than 5 calories per serving

Low calorie: Less than 40 calories per serving (or less than 120 calories per meal)

Reduced calorie: 25% less calories than the same amount of a similar food

No fat: Less than 0.5g fat per serving
Low fat: Less than 3g fat per serving (less than 30% of calories from fat per meal)
Low saturated fat: Less than 1g fat per serving
Reduced fat: 25% less fat than the same amount of a similar food

No cholesterol: Less than 2mg cholesterol per serving
Low cholesterol: Less than 20mg cholesterol per serving
Reduced cholesterol: 25% less cholesterol than the same amount of a similar food

No salt: Less than 5mg sodium per serving
Low salt: Less than 140mg sodium per serving
Reduced salt: 25% less sodium than the same amount of a similar food

No sugar: Less than 0.5g sugar per serving
Low sugar: No requirements—make sure to read the label
Reduced sugar: 25% less sugar than the same amount of a similar food

As you can see, eating six servings of a no-fat food can actually total as much as 3g of fat.

For someone who is severely restricting their fat intake, this can greatly hinder their progress. It's best to be informed and make wise shopping decisions. Take charge and be responsible.

Trim the Fat - Just because a macaroni and cheese frozen dinner is oozing extra cheese doesn't mean you have to eat it. A common sense approach to preparing and consuming convenience foods can go a long way to making them healthier.

When you take a frozen meal out halfway to stir it, remove or blot away any excess oils and fats. Transfer to a real plate when finished, so you can discard the excess sauces.

If rice or pasta calls for a heaping tablespoon of butter, opt instead for a conservative teaspoon of soy margarine or olive oil. Ultimately your rice will taste the same and you won't have all those extra calories to contend with.

Milk and cookies is a long-time favorite, but try for milk and crackers next time.

Experiment with jellies and spreads instead of the usual mayonnaise and butter for

toppings.

Portion Control - It's easy to lose track of how much you've eaten when you drink or eat straight from the container. Stay on track by carefully measuring out serving sizes before you begin eating.

When you do buy items like chips or pretzels, locate the appropriate serving size on the nutrition label. As soon as you arrive home, divide the larger bag into individual servings in small plastic baggies.

In this same spirit, when snacking on any food, separate a single serving's worth and put it aside in a plate or bowl. Then immediately put the food away, before you begin eating, to avoid temptation.

Try not to make the original packages easily accessible. Purchasing a bag re-sealer is more effective than using chip clips, because you are less likely to cut open a bag than to simply unclip it. Heavy-duty tape and hard-to-open containers can also do the trick.

Fast Food - Ideally, fast food should be avoided. However, the ever-expanding menus at many of the top fast-food chains are now offering many options that can fit into a variety of diet plans.

Look for grilled meals instead of fried. Opt for alternate sides instead of French fries if possible. Many chains offer salad and yogurt options as well.

Ask for substitutions if a menu item is not quite ideal. For example, you can request a hamburger without a bun, or you can request a bun without a hamburger. If you cannot get the substitution, make modifications yourself before eating, i.e. throw the hamburger bun in a nearby garbage bin or discard half your French fries.

Make Your Own - There's no rule that says only store-bought, pre-packaged foods are

convenient. Take time on the weekend or on days off to do some conscientious grocery shopping and cook one or two large meals of something healthy that you enjoy. Separate into serving sizes and refrigerate (or freeze) as necessary.

Buy fruits, vegetables, deli meats, and cheeses to snack on, and prepare them ahead of time by slicing into bite-sized pieces. Separate into serving sizes and store to use as snacks during the week; since they now require no preparation, you'll be more likely to reach for the carrot sticks and less likely to reach for more processed convenience foods. Your own frozen vegetables make a delicious side dish in a snap.

Voila! Now you have your own frozen dinners (or lunches, or snacks) with much healthier contents.

SOCIAL EATING AND TRAVELING TIPS

It's one thing to stick with your diet regimen when you're at home, in control of the contents of your refrigerator and your portion sizes. But what about going out to dinner with friends? Worse, how do you stay on track when your dream vacation has you seated by the dessert cart at every meal?

Eating right when you're out of your comfort zone can actually be *easier* than when you are at home, so long as you think smart and plan ahead.

Getting in shape can be an arduous journey, and you should allow yourself to celebrate along the way! However, celebrating doesn't mean two helpings of dessert. Instead, focus on these simple tips to help you enjoy your dinners out on the town without compromising your weight loss goals.

Daily Plan

Incorporate meals out like any others. Don't skip meals beforehand, setting

yourself up to be starving, then overeat. Plan. Don't be afraid to call ahead and find out what the specials are going to be and figure out a couple of choices, so that you don't stress out when you arrive and order foods that are not the best options for your diet.

If the restaurant or event is going to serve you buffet-style, again, call ahead to plan. If that's not an option, here are a couple ideas. First, ask someone with whom you're comfortable sharing your dietary concerns to help you. Tell him or her what foods you can eat (or what you cannot eat) and ask the person to fill a plate for you. Or second, walk up to the buffet table(s) beforehand with no plate. Just take a casual stroll around and see which foods are being served. Then decide if you would like to ask someone else to place your selections on a plate for you or if you would prefer to get them yourself.

Slow and Steady

First of all, use manners and eat slowly. Not only will this help with your digestion, it slows your eating down so that you don't "gulp" and be a chow-hound, eating everything in sight.

If out with others, remember you are also there for socializing, so talk between bites. Set your eating utensils down while you chew. Have a sip of water between bites. The goal is not to see how fast can you wolf down the food while someone else is talking.

Have fun along the way

Food has become our society's way of bringing people together, bonding friends, and building relationships. Unfortunately, for those of us looking to cut back on what and how much we eat, this can make previously enjoyable dinner dates to be dreaded and avoided tasks.

It doesn't have to be this way. Remember why you've been invited out in the first

place: to enjoy the company of others. You do *not* need certain amounts of food or certain types of food to accomplish this. Still go out, but help choose a place with foods you can eat. For example, opt for a restaurant with salads and low-fat menu choices instead of a place with all deep-fried batter-dipped menu choices and heavy desserts. The worst thing you can do for your self-confidence is to shut yourself off from your circle of family and friends, or to stay shut in the house all the time. After all, when you do meet your weight loss goal, you still want friends around to enjoy it with!

Strength in numbers

If you're nervous about your willpower, go through a couple of trial runs with other friends who are watching what they eat. In this case, peer pressure can be a positive thing, as you all encourage one another to make healthy meal decisions.

Avoid the urge to compete with one another to see who can drink the most water and eat only shredded lettuce leaves. Instead, choose an old favorite and split it with a partner. This way, you won't feel deprived and your portion size will automatically be limited. Not only will your waistlines be smaller, but so will your bills!

Call ahead

Chances you, whatever restaurant you will be frequenting has heard every request in the book—twice. If you're concerned you won't be able to find something on the menu that meets your needs, call ahead and explain what you're looking for. Even if it's not on the menu, they may be able to whip something up especially for you if you've called in advance.

Phoning early can also provide nutrition information for certain meals, if you need this information. And be flexible and open to new ideas. The cook may have his or her

own special recipes and ideas.

Avoid temptation

There is no law that says you must have a basket of bread, butter and oil before a meal out. If it is on your table when you are seated, request that it be brought back to the kitchen.

If your dinner mates are eager to start off with the carbs, then order a glass of water and take a sip each time you are tempted to break bread. Besides, you'll want the time you would have wasted buttering and dipping to spend reading the menu for smart, sensible choices.

Don't assume that you'll be able to hold out on temptations throughout the entire meal. Set yourself up for success when you order by requesting they leave off the oils and sauces. Request that your meat and vegetables be steamed, not fried. Order a salad (with light or no dressing, on the side) or side of veggies instead of fries or mashed potatoes.

Bring your own...

If there are certain food flavorings that you have come to enjoy as substitutes for traditionally fattening ones, bring them along and request that the chef prepare your meal plain. If you like Splenda in your iced tea, bring along a few packets. If a dash of homegrown or store-bought spices moves your taste buds better than a slathering of mayonnaise and mustard, then bring along a shaker. Bring along your own low-fat dressing for your salad.

On vacation, save on eating out and use the funds to rent a room with a mini-fridge and microwave. Then take along (or pick up) a few lite, healthy items to eat as snacks in-between (or in place of) meals. Avoiding even one or two meals out will help

reduce temptation and provides more time to enjoy other vacationing activities.

It's all in the portions

Most restaurants offer half-sizes (at smaller prices). If these are not listed on the menu, just ask, and your request will more than likely be accommodated. Restaurant portions are significantly larger than actual portion sizes; a half-size will more than adequately replace your normal meal size.

There's no rule that you must order your meal from the entrée list. Peruse the appetizer menu for attractive (and smaller) options. You can also create a delicious and unique meal by combining various side dishes.

Alternately, you can request your doggie bag in advance. If they don't offer to package half your meal for you, decide for yourself (before you begin eating) what an appropriate portion size is and wrap up the remainder.

A doggie bag leaves you something delicious to look forward to the next day. Place it under your seat so it won't present a temptation while you're enjoying your current meal.

Fill up on the good stuff

Drink plenty of water before you leave for the restaurant, and while you wait for the food to arrive. This will help fill you up and prevent hunger-inspired indulgences.

Request your salad (and/or soup, if it's not creamy) be brought out first, and dig in. By the time your food arrives, you should be able to more rationally determine what portion sizes are appropriate, and if anything needs to be avoided.

Dreaded desserts

First of all, do not order dessert until you are completely finished with your meal.

You may be full and not want anything. And that's certainly not a crime!

After the meal, if everyone is splurging on the dessert menu, keep in mind that you don't have to join in just to be part of the "gang." Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea to end your meal. Or ask someone to split a dessert with you. Hint: Doggie bags can also be used for desserts! So split it in half and take part home for another day or your neighbor.

You have to be left out of choosing a neat dessert, either. See if the kitchen can put together a fruit bowl or a sorbet dish to satisfy your cravings without putting all your conscientious work at dinner to waste. This might be something to call ahead about..hint!

Distract yourself

Vacations should be a luxurious time to indulge oneself and have fun. Though it does lead to eating out more often, it also removes many of the day's temptations: you won't be wandering over to the kitchen when you're bored, or overindulging at the grocery store and then feeling "obligated" to eat what you've bought.

Spend time in the pool, on the sand, and at the shops, not at the restaurants. Most vacation hot spots are ideal for eating on the go; you can pick up a small meal from a roadside vendor and eat it while walking the boardwalk and enjoying the sights and sounds.

Don't make food about suffering. If the smell of saltwater taffy engulfs you, treat yourself—to one. Having a small amount will indulge your craving without compromising your diet. Better yet, after you buy your taffy, don't begin eating it until you've walked far enough away to avoid being tempted by the smell.

Try making a rule like, "If I eat, I need to enjoy a fun activity, too: a walk, bike ride, swim, tennis, putt-putt, etc." Then coordinate daily "pairings" or events with meal

planning. Life, including vacations, does not have to be all about food. Nor does it have to focus on food.

Don't stress

Vacations and meals out are intended to be enjoyment, not torture. If you do go a little overboard, it's important not to beat yourself up over it. Forgive yourself and get on with life. Simply use that experience to learn where you can improve the next time you are in that situation.

With the right approach, eating out can be a pleasurable experience. Remember, a successful diet is a lifelong lifestyle modification. You need to be able to incorporate healthful eating out activities into your routine.

What happens if you DO stress? Add extra activities to your schedule. Swim some laps. Walk or jog. Leave your wallet in the trunk and go to a mall for a shop-walk. Take a tour. Visit a museum. Enjoy a park and feed the ducks. Just get out, focus on something else and enjoy life.

BASIC MEAL & MENU PLANNING

As a basis for meals and menu planning, refer to the pyramid information mentioned earlier to make sure you have the basic food requirements met for all family members. Then cross check and plan by looking over basic food categories to target healthy foods to fit the lifestyles and health of everyone. For example, if someone has depression, add some foods mentioned above to his or her dietary plans that aid in the healing and prevention of depression.

Meal planning also depends upon several factors like the number of people eating, meal times, special dietary concerns, budget, available foods, recipes on hand and likes

and dislikes of everyone who will be eating. Begin by choosing foods and recipes that you like and know how to prepare well and that fit into everyone's dietary plans. If one or more people have special needs, like diabetics, plan ahead for substitutions either in the food preparation or food substitution for that individual or for those individuals.

There are a few things to note when making meal choices and menu planning. First, some foods may be advertised a certain way, but that doesn't mean you can't experiment. For instance, eggs and sausage can be served for dinner, not just breakfast. And waffles can be made from healthy wheat grains and eaten for lunch with fresh fruits instead of sugary syrup and heavy butter for breakfast.

Add variety, too. Have other family members jump in and prepare meals some nights and on weekends. Kids enjoy making macaroni and cheese, so host mac-n-cheese night on Wednesdays, for example. Then alternate different vegetable combinations, colors and textures to vary the menu on a weekly basis (no need to let boredom take over on Wednesdays with the same routine!)

To help with family food budget concerns, clip coupons from newspapers, weekend inserts, and any place you can find them. Downloaded coupons from the Internet to save money, too, from places like CoolSavings.com and CouponCart.com.

[RefundingMakesCents](#) offers an affordable subscription to a neat print magazine for coupon deals, trades and lots more, with a secret code to their website for Internet coupon-codes for lots of online companies like Amazon.com (cookware) and Barnes and Noble (cookbooks).

Also note seasonal food selections for savings. Create menus and meals based upon what's on special that week or month. Hint: stock up and store or freeze special-

priced items and family favorites when possible and storage room and the budget allows. But don't over do it. With convenience stores and supermarkets for food shopping in practically every neighborhood anymore, there is no need to hoard. An old saying, "Haste makes waste" might apply if you see a great buy, purchase multiple items, then let them become outdated and have to toss them out.

One fun way to save is by trading coupons and working out food deals with friends, family, neighbors, your church group and anyone else who'd like to join in. Food cooperatives and farm markets available in your area may offer special pricing to groups or large purchases. So team up for better purchasing power and split everything up between group members. If you're not into that much organization, go one-on-one with a neighbor, other friend or relative. Buy a huge bag of potatoes, onions, oats, and / or other foods, then share.

Here is one special item to note with regards to dietary planning. It's unfortunate, but fast foods, especially those that are high in fat content (fried, greasy foods), are often cheaper than good, healthy food choices. For example, lean beef costs more than high-fat beef; cereals high in nutritional value are often priced much higher than the low-cost, sugary brand names. And low income and homeless people are particularly victims of this situation, many times needing to turn to the less healthier food choices for survival. So whenever possible, your plans might want to include donating a portion to homeless shelters and churches who would probably be more than willing to take extras off your hands.

In conclusion, arriving at the Perfect Diet may be no quick, simple task in today's world of fast-paced living. But there sure are many helpful planning solutions available to

fit every budget both online and in the real world. And by choosing foods to help with our individual health issues and concerns, and reaching out for support, information and dietary planning when needed, not one of us has to “go it” alone.