



Keep a Food Diary

CHALLENGE
Record what you eat for a month.

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Keep a Food Diary."
2. To complete this Challenge, record what you eat on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep records of your completed challenge, in case your organization requires documentation.

When Georgia resident Krystie Faulkner was looking through her photos from the holidays, she was bothered by what she saw. At 33 years old, she weighed 275 pounds. And when she mistook herself for her aging mother in those family photos, she knew right then she wanted to improve her diet and lose weight.

"The first step that I took to change my life was really just watching what I ate for a day and writing every single thing down," Krystie says. "I thought that if I wrote it down, I could look at what I was doing and see where I could change things."

Keeping a food diary helped her realize how often she ate empty-calorie foods like cakes and cookies and loaded up on second servings and extra cheese. And it motivated her to change. She's lost 120 pounds since she started keeping a food diary three years ago. She even chronicled her weight loss on YouTube.com and her blog.

Can you remember what you ate for breakfast, lunch, and dinner yesterday? And what about the snacks you had in between meals? Do you really know what you're eating, how much, and how often? Studies have shown that keeping a food diary can help you cut calories, eat healthier, and lose weight.

It can also motivate you to adopt other healthy behaviors. It wasn't long after Krystie began keeping a food journal that she started exercising regularly. Then she finished a 5K race. And she's encouraging others along the way. If you're ready to make some healthy changes and learn the truth about your diet, keep a food diary every day this month.

Food Diary Doubles Weight Loss

About 70 percent of Americans are overweight or obese. If you're on the heavy side, you may have considered a diet, diet pill, or program to help you lose weight. However, recent research suggests one of the best tools for weight loss is a food diary.

In a recent study, dieters who wrote down everything they ate lost twice as much weight as those who didn't.

About 1,700 overweight or obese adults were part of the study. Their average weight was 212 pounds in the beginning. During the 20-week study, the dieters who kept a food diary six or seven days a week lost an average of 18 pounds. Those who did not keep a food diary only lost an average of 9 pounds in the same amount of time.



Keeping a food diary can help you keep your calories in check. By cutting about 500 calories a day from your diet, you could lose one to two pounds a week. This might also lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes. You could also use a food diary to identify problem eating patterns or to keep track of your salt intake.

Take the Healthy Eating Quiz

How much do you really know about your eating habits? Take the Healthy Eating Quiz to find out.

Y N Don't Know

- I know how many calories I consume each day.
- I eat a healthy amount of fruits and vegetables daily.
- I eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.
- I always drink an adequate amount of water.
- I know how many calories I should consume for a healthy weight.

If you answered **No** or **Don't Know** to any of these statements, you could benefit from keeping a food diary. When you know what you're eating, you can make adjustments in your diet that can help you lose weight, reduce your risk for chronic diseases, and improve your health.

How to Record Your Diet Daily

- ✓ Use a paper notebook, web-based program, or smartphone app to keep track of your daily diet. Or develop your own system. It's important that you choose a method to record your daily diet that works for you.
- ✓ Write down everything you eat and drink for meals and snacks.
- ✓ Include the location and time of day with each entry to help you identify specific eating patterns.
- ✓ Be honest. You may not want to include an indulgent dessert in your food diary. But listing everything you eat is the only way to see what you're doing right and what you can improve on.
- ✓ Keep your food diary with you and record what you eat after each meal or snack.

Count Your Calories

The average 40-year-old needs 1,800 to 2,600 calories a day. But everyone's calorie needs are different. An active teen burns more calories than an inactive teen. Men usually need more calories than women do. And everyone needs fewer calories as they age. Use a calorie calculator, such as this one (<http://tinyurl.com/drcua>), to help you find your calorie goal.

Choose your FAVORITES UNDER 400 CALORIES			
400 calories or under each			
McDouble*	310 cal.	Premium Chicken Sandwich*	380 cal.
Angus Snack Wraps*	290 cal.	Roast Beef Sandwich*	340 cal.
Roast Chicken Sandwich*	380 cal.	Spicy Chicken Sandwich*	380 cal.
Medium Fries	380 cal.	Hot Fudge Sundae	350 cal.
300 calories or under each			
Egg McWhiffle*	300 cal.	Strawberry Sundae	310 cal.
Cheddarburger	300 cal.	Apple Pie	250 cal.
Sausage Burrito	300 cal.	Hot Hamburger	280 cal.
Apple & Maple Pancakes	290 cal.	Chick'n McWhiffle*	280 cal.
French Softened Salad (without dressing)	290 cal.	Spicy Chicken Sandwich*	380 cal.
Hot Coffee (medium)	190 cal.	Hot Fudge Sundae	350 cal.
200 calories or under each			
Vanilla Cone	170 cal.	Hot Brewed Chocolate Milk (no nuts)	120 cal.
Apple Pie	250 cal.	Hot Brewed Chocolate Milk (with nuts)	130 cal.
Hot Coffee (small)	160 cal.	Hot Brewed Chocolate Milk (no nuts)	120 cal.
Hot Coffee (large)	180 cal.	Hot Brewed Chocolate Milk (with nuts)	130 cal.
100 calories or under each			
Milk (1% low fat)	100 cal.	Hot Coffee (small)	160 cal.
Lemonade	90 cal.	Hot Coffee (large)	180 cal.
Apple Slice	80 cal.	Hot Coffee (medium)	170 cal.
Hot Coffee (medium)	170 cal.	Hot Coffee (small)	160 cal.

How many calories are you eating?

Read food labels to find out. Most packaged food labels include the number of calories in each serving. (And make a note of how much they list as a serving. It's often a lot less than you think it is!) You can also use your food diary to track how much sugar, sodium, and fat you're eating.

Look for calorie information at restaurants. In the United States, all restaurants with 20 or more locations must provide nutritional information for their menu items. In most cases, you can find this information online. And what you learn might surprise you. A typical fast-food hamburger contains about 600 calories. A 16-ounce soft drink contains about 185 calories. And a serving of French fries can add another 350 calories to your meal if you eat out.

Sources:

American Journal of Preventive Medicine.; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.; National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute.; Harvard School of Public Health.; Georgia Public Broadcasting.

Choose a food diary.

- Paper Daily Food and Activity Diary: tinyurl.com/bx69pzo
- Web-based USDA SuperTracker: www.supertracker.usda.gov
- Smartphone Weigh What Matters app: tinyurl.com/7exe46v
- Many other food diaries are available in print, online, and for your smartphone.



Review Your Results

In the food diary study, the more successful participants took time to review their eating habits. Some discovered that simply writing down everything they ate helped them regulate their diet. Others found that reviewing their eating habits with someone else helped them make better food choices.

- ✓ Add up the total number of calories you eat in a day. Then see if it matches up with what you should consume to maintain your weight or drop a few pounds.
- ✓ Compare your diet with the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate (<http://tinyurl.com/ctu5zzw>) or ChooseMyPlate.gov to find out what you're doing right and how you can improve your diet. Maybe you need to eat more fruits and vegetables. Or maybe you could benefit from eating more healthy proteins like fish, beans, and nuts.
- ✓ Look for eating patterns. You might discover that you skip breakfast frequently, or eat too many snacks at night. Or you might learn that you're a healthy eater during the week, but you overindulge on weekends. Use this information to improve your diet.
- ✓ Share your food diary findings. Talk to a friend or co-worker about your diet. Or meet with your doctor or nutritionist to review your food journal. This practice can help you be more accountable for what you eat.

Set a Goal

After you've made the effort to take an honest look at your diet for a month, set a goal to improve, lose weight, or eat healthier. And keep track of your progress. Your food diary will become a tool that can help you change your life.





Keep a Food Diary

CHALLENGE
Record what you eat for a month.

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you keep a food diary.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you kept a record of what you ate. To complete the Challenge, you must meet the goal on at least 22 days out of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: <input type="text"/>							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	Weight & weekly summary
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	

_____ Number of days this month I kept a food diary

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

