

YOUR  
FOUR STEPS  
FOR  
*Making  
Better Food  
Choices*



**SecurityHealth Plan**

Promises kept, plain and simple.

# Introduction

If it's true that we are what we eat, what does it take for us to be healthy?

In most cases, it takes foods that are different from what most Americans eat, but they are foods within your reach. They can help you lower your risk of type-2 diabetes, high cholesterol, certain types of cancer and heart disease. Plus, they can help you look and feel better about yourself.

If you've found your way here, you're probably thinking about trying to start eating foods that are more beneficial to your health. We're glad you've made it this far. We want you to be as healthy as possible, and eating healthful food is one of the best things you can do to maintain or even improve your health.

You might have tried to start a healthful foods regimen in the past. But instead of just setting up a better diet for yourself for temporary gains, let us help you make a lifestyle change and establish permanent healthier eating habits in four steps. Let us help you enjoy the challenge of creating a better, healthier life.

Continue reading for more information on how you can tackle the stages of creating a healthful foods habit ***one step at a time.***

***"I Might Try to Eat Healthier Foods" .....Page 3***

***"I'm Ready to Eat Healthier Foods" .....Page 7***

***"I'm Eating Healthful Foods" .....Page 12***

***"I Will Keep Eating Healthful Foods" .....Page 17***



## “I *Might* Try to Eat Healthier Foods”

**Are you thinking about trying to eat more healthful foods? That’s great! You might not yet be ready to change what you eat, but think about how a decision to try to improve what you eat might benefit you.**

### Better choices, not dieting

“*Diet*,” to many, is a dirty four-letter word. But making better food choices is different from dieting. Like dieting, it is about adjusting what you eat to fuel your body. Yet making better food choices is an ongoing lifestyle change that will permanently help you provided that you stick with your plans. It involves portion control, nutrition and personal growth.

Changing your eating habits isn’t easy, but making better food choices helps you:

- **Raise your energy and mental alertness.** Junk food typically creates an energy spike that quickly turns to a crash when your body tries to level off your blood sugar. Healthful foods slow down the digestive process and help you avoid crashes.
- **Control your weight.** Junk and processed foods typically consist of empty calories. In other words, they contain a lot of calories, but few nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants. Replace doughnuts, soda, candy and fast foods with fruits and vegetables, beans, lean meats, whole wheat breads and pastas to reduce your caloric intake and give you better nutrition.
- **Decrease your risk of chronic conditions.** Better nutrition lowers your risk of diabetes, obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease and some forms of cancer.

# Step 1

## “I Might Try to Eat Healthier Foods”

Instead of going on and off diets for limited benefits, we invite you to achieve a balance of healthier foods that provides you with a healthier life.

### Why is this important to me?

We can tell you all about the many advantages of making better food choices. But consider for yourself why you might want to eat better. In the end, your reasons are likely to be the ones that inspire you the most and your own motivation is vital to your success. Which of these benefits would you like to achieve?

*Raise my energy and mental alertness*

*Control my weight*

*Decrease my risk of chronic conditions*

*Other* \_\_\_\_\_

*What might get in the way of my healthful eating goals?  
(Examples: dining out, snacking, socializing)*

---

---

---

*What can I plan to do to help avoid those obstacles?  
(Examples: packing a lunch, finding low-calorie snacks,  
planning social gatherings around activities other than eating)*

---

---

---

## Envision your rewards

Imagine what success can be.

**Picture yourself:** How will you feel when you look in the mirror after you achieve your goals? Imagine being eager to show off how better food choices have lowered your weight.

**More energy:** You'll achieve more with greater personal satisfaction. You can be more enthusiastic for your daily life because you will be more mentally sharp than you ever have been. You can have more energy for exercise, daily activities and playing with your children or grandchildren.

**Imagine your new lifestyle:** You will reach better health, not because you have to, but because you want to. Imagine providing family and friends with a positive example on nutrition and healthful eating. Imagine how proud you will be of that.



# Step 1

## “I *Might* Try to Eat Healthier Foods”

### Online resources

Try these websites for more tips on what you can do to start a healthful eating routine. You'll find information on daily food planning, healthful eating on a budget, and how to complement healthful eating with physical activity.

**Choose My Plate – [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)**

**The American Dietetic Association – [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)**

**United States Department of Agriculture – [fnic.nal.usda.gov](http://fnic.nal.usda.gov)**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention –  
[www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)**

**American Heart Association – [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)**

**Shape Up America! – [www.shapeup.org](http://www.shapeup.org)**





## “I’m *Ready* to Eat Healthier Foods”

**Congratulations on deciding that healthful eating is important to you. You might have tried to make better food choices in the past with limited success. But have you thought about what small steps you could take now to help you make those choices and establish them as habits? Ease your transition toward a healthier lifestyle by planning ahead.**

### Get started

According to government guidelines at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov), at least half of our plates should consist of fruits and vegetables; one-quarter grains, especially whole grains; and one quarter should consist of proteins. We should add to that about 3 cups worth of dairy products a day. But how do you plan to start making better food choices so you can set yourself up for success? Let us guide you through it. Take the time now to:

- 1. Decide when you’ll start:** Schedule a date soon, preferably within a month, so you still will be excited to start.

*My date is:* \_\_\_\_\_

*I picked this date because:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

## Step 2

### “I’m Ready to Eat Healthier Foods”

**2. Get the support you deserve.** Create a list of people who you will tell that you’re trying to make better food choices. Tell them what you want to do and ask for their support. The people who are most important to you often will be your best sources of support.

*People who might provide support:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Talk to your doctor.** It is important to discuss your goals with your doctor, especially as your goals relate to health conditions that might be affected by lifestyle changes such as making better food choices.

**4. Establish your path.** Once you’ve talked to your doctor or dietitian, establish what you want to do.

*What steps will you take to make healthful eating a priority?  
(Example: I will get junk food out of the house.)*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





**5. Be SMART and set goals:** Provide yourself with goals that give you direction and motivation by staying SMART.

**Specific:** Make sure your goal leaves no room for interpretation. Keep it precise and write down an exact guide for what you want to do.

**Measurable:** Include benchmarks and time periods that will help define success.

**Achievable:** Make sure your goal is attainable.

**Relevant:** It's good to have support from family and friends, but your goal should matter to you at least as much as anyone else.

**Timed:** Change requires a commitment. Designate a clear timeframe for you to achieve your goal.

Here are examples of SMART goals:

*"Starting Thursday, I will include at least one serving of vegetables at each meal."*

*"Beginning Monday, I will pack a lunch for the next day so I can avoid fast food."*



Think about what you can achieve over the next week to help you make better food choices. Once you achieve your goals, continue creating SMART goals until your goals become habits.

**What SMART goals can you set for yourself?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Step 2

## “I’m Ready to Eat Healthier Foods”

### Plan to eat right

Making better food choices sounds easy. You just go to the store, buy the right foods and eat them, right? But just because it sounds easy doesn’t mean it is. You’re attempting to change habits that you’ve developed throughout your lifetime. So try the following to make healthful eating easier:

- **Read food labels:** Allot time when shopping to study food labels. Less-nutritious foods contain excessive amounts of fat and refined carbohydrates. When reading the ingredient list, see whether white flour, sugar, fat or salt is among the first three ingredients. If it is, the food has more of that ingredient than anything else. Look instead for ingredient lists that have less processed, more healthful foods first.



- **Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables:** Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories. They’re also filling and high in certain beneficial nutrients.

- **Drink plenty of water:** Although it has no food value, water is essential to our survival.
- **Curb your cholesterol, saturated fat and trans-fat:** Research shows that an excessive intake of fat and cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease. Limit deep-fried foods, baked desserts and foods listing partially hydrogenated oil (trans-fat) in the ingredients. Choose skim milk in place of whole milk and lean cuts of beef labeled “choice,” “select” or “lean.”
- **Limit sugar and sodium:** Check for added sugars on the ingredient list. They often are called sucrose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, maple syrup and fructose. Compare sodium in foods such as soup, bread and frozen meals. Add herbs and spices instead of salt when you cook.

- **Minimize your alcohol:** Alcohol is a high-calorie substance that has no nutritional value. Alcohol also might make it more difficult to stay motivated and follow your goals.
- **Roast, steam, poach or broil:** Avoid frying whenever possible to lower your fat intake.
- **Replace oil, margarine or butter with applesauce:** Replace the oil in your baked goods with unsweetened applesauce at a 1:1 ratio to reduce the fat and calorie content of the final product. Doing so will add moistness and sweetness, and for every half-cup of oil replaced, you will save about 900 calories and 110 grams of fat. Replace a half-cup of butter with applesauce to cut 850 calories and 91 grams of fat. If you're concerned that you might not care for any taste difference, try replacing half of the fat with applesauce for a gradual transition.

## Record your progress

Keep track of how well you meet your daily food goals in a journal. List the day of the week and what you eat with each meal. As an option, you also can track the calories you eat.

Then, try writing down your thoughts about the day. Ask yourself:

- *Did I reach my goals?*
- *What helped me or prevented me from reaching my goals today?*
- *What about the day would I especially like to remember?*
- *Is there anything that I would do differently next time?*

## You're one step closer

Congratulations again on coming this far. You're about to give yourself the gift of a healthier lifestyle. We look forward to helping you take your next steps. Remember to seek out information from reliable resources in magazines, in books and on the Internet to help guide you along the way.



Step  
3

## “I’m Eating Healthful Foods”

**You’ve started to achieve a healthier lifestyle and you’ve begun to eat healthier foods. Be proud! You’ll improve your confidence and energy the more you stick with your plans. As you continue, keep using this guide as a helpful tool. Keep it where you can find it. Remember to maintain helpful relationships with your doctor, family and friends along the way.**

As you strive to achieve permanent healthier eating habits, keep these points in mind:

**It’s hard to break old habits.** Practice your new healthful habits to make them routine. It will take time for them to replace your old habits.

**You deserve friends.** You might find it easier to maintain your new habits when you have support from at least one friend or family member. Talk with them about how they can support you with your healthier eating habits.

*My support person is* \_\_\_\_\_

**Don’t worry about setbacks.** If you don’t meet your goals for one day, you haven’t failed. Remember to focus on your long-term goals. Make note of any setbacks, learn from them and move on.

**More news is good news.** Keep your mind on track by reading websites, magazines, books and more that feature professionals who can help you. Learn all you can about healthier eating and changing old habits.

## Pay attention to portion sizes

It will be easier for you to reach your goals if you have a good idea of what your portion sizes should be. Use these everyday objects to judge sensible portion sizes.

<b>Food item</b>	<b>One serving</b>	<b>Equal to the size of ...</b>
<b>Potatoes, rice, pasta</b>	1 cup	Tennis ball, or an ice cream scoop
<b>Cheese</b>	1 ounce	Pair of dice, or your thumb
<b>Ice cream</b>	1 cup	Large scoop the size of a baseball
<b>Baked potato</b>	1 whole	Light bulb
<b>Peanut butter</b>	2 tablespoons	Ping-pong ball
<b>Meat, fish, poultry</b>	3 ounces	Deck of cards
<b>Butter or margarine</b>	1 teaspoon	Thumb tip
<b>Salad dressing</b>	2 tablespoons	Ping-pong ball
<b>Nuts or small candies</b>	1 ounce	One handful
<b>Chips or pretzels</b>	1 ounce	Two handfuls

Also, slow down when you eat, and don't keep eating until you're full. By slowing down, you allow your brain time to receive the message from your stomach that you're full. If you eat quickly, you're more likely to exceed your portion size because you'll still feel hungry.

*What are some things you can do to track your portion sizes?*

---

---

---

# Step 3

## “I’m Eating Healthful Foods”

### Watch out for emotional eating

Sadness, boredom and other negative emotions can drive a pattern of overeating called emotional eating. Emotional eating can occur at joyous occasions, too, such as parties and weddings. Controlling emotional eating is an important part of healthful eating.

People who eat for emotional reasons often gain too much weight, which puts them at greater risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and cancer. Excessive eating has emotional consequences as well, such as guilt and embarrassment.

Here are some steps you can take to stop emotional eating:

- **Learn to recognize hunger.** The next time you reach for a snack, ask yourself why you are going to eat. If you are truly hungry, you’ll notice physical symptoms, such as a growling stomach.



Other, less-obvious hunger cues include irritability and difficulty concentrating. If those signs are absent, you probably don’t need to eat.

- **Build a support network.** Surround yourself with friends and family who support your efforts to change your eating habits to improve your chances of success.
- **Cultivate other interests.** Find an activity you enjoy, such as yoga, playing a musical instrument, or painting to increase self-confidence, which is often low in emotional eaters. If you find your eating is driven by boredom, a new passion can fill your hours and make you less likely to look to food for emotional satisfaction.

## Common pitfalls

A lack of time, work obligations and boredom are common reasons people give when they don't stick to their healthful-food routines. Consider these suggestions when you deal with similar situations.

### *When I'm pressed for time, I will:*

- Pack tomorrow's lunch the night before to avoid fast food.
- Keep fresh fruit in the fridge so I can have an easy snack when I'm on the go.
- Keep healthful dinners frozen for when I don't have time to cook.

### *When I travel, I can:*

- Ask for sparkling water instead of alcoholic drinks.
- Choose coffee or tea after a meal rather than fattening desserts.
- Ask hotel staff to suggest restaurants that serve healthful food.

### *To avoid boredom with healthful food, I can:*

- Experiment with low-fat, low-calorie versions of my favorite meals.
- Try a variety of healthful foods at restaurants.
- Sign up for a healthful-foods cooking class.

### *When I'm bored and stuck indoors, I can:*

- Tackle a household project.
- Call a friend.
- Sign up for a fitness class.
- Try a new exercise.
- Work on hobbies such as crafts or playing an instrument.

## Reward yourself

Starting a healthful-food routine is a big deal that calls for you to reward yourself for your hard work. Rewards don't have to cost much. They can even be free. Just choose a reward that doesn't undo what you've accomplished. For example, treat yourself to a healthful-foods cooking class or a subscription to a healthful-eating magazine.

*Weeks of maintaining your efforts. Reward:*

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_

## You're one step closer again

The longer you stick with your healthful-food routine, the greater your chance of making it a long-term habit. And you've already come quite far. Think about how your health and quality of life already have changed for the better. We now encourage you to take the long-term steps that will enforce your healthier habits for life.





# Step 4

## “I will *Keep Eating* Healthful Foods”

Your progress in achieving a healthier life is significant. You no doubt feel healthier, more energetic and confident now that you're taking positive steps. These changes make you a positive example for others trying to eat healthful foods on a regular basis. Your new habits will have long-term benefits for your quality of life. Take this opportunity to make your healthful habits permanent.

### Keep going

Setbacks are bound to happen in establishing a healthier foods routine. If you don't meet your goals for one day, you haven't failed. Don't feel guilty. Focus on your long-term goals. Make note of your setbacks, learn from them and move on. Don't worry that an occasional slip will cause you to fail.

- ***Did you indulge in a rich dessert with dinner?*** No problem. Just make sure you're not eating one every night.
- ***Did you skip breakfast today because you were late for work?*** It's no cause for concern unless you stop eating breakfast on a regular basis.
- ***Did you eat fast food because you were pressed for time?*** Don't worry unless you are consistently going through the drive-through.

# Step 4

## “I will Keep Eating healthful foods”

But as you get closer to your goals, be careful not to let slips become falls. Here are some other things to remember:

- Chances are you remember your old habits and how they caused you to regularly eat unhealthful foods. Did you eat a candy bar every day for an afternoon snack? Did you not consistently eat vegetables with dinner? If you see old patterns returning, stop them.
- Continue to keep a food journal. Self-monitoring is key to helping you retain your new habits.
- Reward yourself for maintaining your healthful habits.
- Remind yourself of how much you’ve accomplished and think about how much better you feel.

### Reflect on your progress

Review the journal you started in Step 2 to remind yourself of how far you’ve come and why you started a healthful-foods regimen. Then, make sure to keep writing in it. Here are some things you can ask yourself:

- *What have you learned about eating healthful foods?*
- *How do you feel about your progress?*
- *What helps you stay positive about your healthful-eating habits?*
- *What convinced you to start eating healthful foods more often?*
- *What support or praise have you received from family and friends? What have they said that has been helpful?*
- *What changes do you see and feel in your body?*
- *What advice would you give someone who has decided to start a healthful-foods routine?*
- *What has been the best part of creating a healthful-foods routine for you?*
- *What can you do to avoid returning to old habits?*

## Revisit your goals

Remember the SMART goals you established in Step 2: **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant** and **Timely**. The goals you established in getting this far helped you make healthful eating a habit. But many who establish healthful eating habits are unsure of what to do after they achieve some success. Shift your goals from starting your healthful-eating habits toward maintaining them.

Find new pursuits related to healthful eating, and continue learning about healthful eating strategies through the Internet, books and magazines. Here are some examples of goals you can try:

*“Starting Tuesday, I will try at least one healthful-food recipe from a magazine or the Internet at least once a week.”*

*“Beginning Saturday, I will plan a weekly menu and stock up on whole grains, fruits and vegetables for meals and snacks.”*



Don't forget to provide yourself with small, healthful rewards when you achieve your benchmarks. Celebrate your successes.

*Think about what you can achieve over the next week to help you make better food choices. Once you achieve your goals, continue creating SMART goals until your goals become habits. What SMART goals can you set for yourself?* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# SecurityHealth Plan<sup>SM</sup>

Promises kept, plain and simple.

1515 North Saint Joseph Avenue  
P.O. Box 8000  
Marshfield, WI 54449-8000

1-800-472-2363  
715-221-9555  
TTY 1-877-727-2232  
TTY 715-221-9898  
Fax 715-221-9500

[www.securityhealth.org](http://www.securityhealth.org)