

# 5 Tips to Kick Bad Eating Habits to the Curb

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Are you guilty of skipping breakfast, ordering takeout, getting jitters from coffee overload and counting potato chips as part of a viable diet plan? It's time to kick those habits to the curb and start eating right. Here's a guide to help you get started.

## **Eat Breakfast**

There's no better way to start your morning — and the year — than with a healthy breakfast. "It provides your body with the fuel it needs to make energy to keep you focused and active throughout the day," says Jessica Crandall, RDN, CDE, AFAA, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Spokesperson. Not only that, but if you are trying to lose weight, fueling your body regularly "will help you from possibly making unhealthy decisions later in the day based on hunger," adds Crandall.

**The key to a good breakfast is balance. Include lean protein, whole grains and fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.**  For example, oatmeal cooked with low-fat milk and sliced almonds and berries or crust-less quiche with mixed veggies, low-fat cheese and a slice of whole-wheat toast.

### **Cut Back on Caffeine**

Too much caffeine can interfere with sleep, can make you jittery and can cause you to lose energy later in the day, says Jim White, RDN, ACSM-HFS, Academy Spokesperson. Keep your caffeine intake in check by limiting regular coffee to 3 cups or less a day, and watch what you put into it. Skip unwanted calories and sugar by drinking it as plain as possible.

Need to wean off? White says to try three things: switch to half decaf or tea, drink plenty of water and eat small, frequent meals to keep up energy.

### **Bring Lunch to Work**

How do you make bringing lunch to work easy? "Have your arsenal of food for the week. Have the right foods to put together," says White. "By stocking up the fridge, you're setting yourself up for success."

White suggests preparing the week's lunches over the weekend — bake chicken, chop veggies, steam rice. Make sure your options include a combination of lean protein and carbohydrates. For example, whole-grain bread with turkey, 1 cup of veggies and a piece of fruit. Or, try a salad with veggies and chicken, a piece of fruit and a 100-calorie cup of low-sodium soup. It doesn't have to be a full meal. "If you're crunched, get a snack," says White. Go for fat-free or low-fat yogurt and fruit, whole-wheat crackers and low-fat cheese or hummus and baby carrots.

### **Eat More Fruits and Vegetables**

Fruits and veggies add color, flavor and texture, plus vitamins, minerals and fibers to your plate. Crandall recommends picking one fruit or veggie you've never tried each time you go to the grocery store. "It's a great way to discover new options," she says.

Don't let winter stop you from enjoying produce either. It might be harder to find fresh options, but frozen and canned are great alternatives.

### **Cook Dinner at Home**

Making meals at home doesn't have to zap the last bit of your time and energy. The trick is to plan ahead. "If the week is cramped for you, then prepping on the weekend is a great time saver," says Crandall. Choose options you can make in advance. For example, cook a batch of soup you can portion out for lunches or dinner during the week, or bake a whole chicken to slice for sandwiches, wraps and casseroles, suggests Crandall.

Use shortcuts such as pre-cut or frozen veggies and keep staples on hand such as low-sodium broth, herbs and lemons for flavoring. A quick and easy idea is to turn leftover beef into stew with beans, no-salt-added diced tomatoes and pre-cut veggies.

### **Quick Tips**

For breakfast eat ...

- Berries with low-fat cottage cheese and high fiber cereal
- Whole-wheat English muffin with peanut butter
- Whole grain cereal with low-fat or fat-free milk
- Oatmeal with a side of hard-boiled or scrambled egg

For lunch try ...

- Oil-based salad dressing instead of a cream-based dressing
- Salad with as many veggies as possible
- Ordering an appetizer as a meal
- Splitting an entrée or save half for later

For dinner use ...

- Pre-cut veggies
- A slow cooker
- Leftovers
- Extra veggies in stir-fry, meatloaf, spaghetti sauce and soup
- Frozen fruit for desserts