

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice



Making lasting behavior change is challenging. It takes a lot of thinking, planning, practicing and decision making. It's easy to slip back into old, mindless habits, and all too frequently, that's exactly what happens. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to make things easier? Well, it turns out there is.

Brian Wansink, Ph.D, director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, has conducted extensive research on the impact of environment on food consumption and other behaviors. It turns out that how much we eat, what we eat and when we eat it is influenced more by our surroundings than internal cues.

Plate Size

For example, plate size makes a difference, as does how food is served.



When food is served "family style", we help ourselves from bowls and platters on the table and we tend to eat more. Likewise, serving sizes correspond to plate size, with larger plates leading to bigger portions consumed.

Simple changes like using smaller plates and serving food from the counter before sitting down to dinner can help cut calorie intake.

What we eat is as important as how much we eat when we are striving to be healthy. Again, research shows that subtle changes to our environment can shift our eating habits in the right direction.

A few strategies Wansink recommends include:

- **MAKE HEALTHY FOODS VISIBLE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE IN YOUR CUPBOARDS AND REFRIGERATOR.**
- **USE CLEAR CONTAINERS AND PLACE THOSE FOODS FRONT AND CENTER AT EYE LEVEL.**
- **MAKE LESS HEALTHY FOODS HARDER TO FIND; PLACE THEM IN THE BACK OF CUPBOARDS OR IN PLACES DIFFICULT TO REACH.**
- **WRAP LEFT OVER GOODIES IN FOIL AND PLACE THEM IN THE BACK OF THE REFRIGERATOR.**



Have trouble getting children to eat vegetables?

Try a little rebranding. Think "**Super Hero Food**," or "**Power Peas**", to make these foods more appealing to children.



It Isn't Just Food That Matters

Physical activity is an important lifestyle component. Removing barriers and making it easier to be active can lead to positive results.

Want to exercise in the morning? Try sleeping in your workout clothes. Keep a pair of sneakers in your car or office to make it easier to go for a quick walk.

Look for ways to add activity to your day by parking in the spot farthest away from your destination and taking stairs whenever possible.

Wansink's research has shown that just making one small change can lead to other sustainable behaviors. Making a conscious choice helps "rewire" the brain, making it easier to break mindless patterns and become more purposeful in our choices.

Tips for Creating a Healthy Environment

Make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Home

- Keep kitchen counters uncluttered and free of food except for a bowl of fruit.
- Do not eat in front of the TV or have one on in the kitchen while eating.
- Use short, wide glasses for water, and tall slim glasses for other beverages
- Remove foods like cookies and ice cream from their packaging and store in opaque, unbranded containers.
- Use the Half Plate Rule: fill half your plate with fruits and veggies and the other half with carbs and proteins.



Work

- Do not keep a candy dish on your desk. If you want to share, keep candy in a dark bowl a few feet away on a table.
- Have pre-portioned, healthy snacks like nuts, cereal, fruit or yogurt available to avoid trips to the vending machine.
- Set a reminder to get up and move or stretch for a few minutes every hour.
- Eat lunch away from your desk, preferably with a coworker in a break room, cafeteria or outdoors.
- Use restrooms on another floor or farther away. Take the stairs to get there.

Grocery Shopping

- Shop the perimeter of the store first. This is where the produce, meat and dairy foods are located.

- Fill your cart with fruits, veggies and other healthy choices before moving into the center aisles.
- Purchase foods with the least processing; five ingredients or less.
- Don't shop when you are hungry.



Restaurants

- Sit at a table near the window, rather than near the bar.
- Check out all of the choices at a buffet line before filling your plate. Don't forget the Half Plate Rule!
- Ask the server to remove the bread or chips from the table.
- Drink a glass of water before eating.

Pat's Pointers

Pat Salzer, Workplace Wellness Consultant & Registered Dietitian



If you are eating healthier and getting more exercise but not seeing a difference on the scale, don't give up. Instead make sure that you are not falling victim to the "halo effect" of Healthy foods. Eating foods lower in fat or sugar is a great way to lose weight, but not if your portions are out of proportion.

We all know that physical activity is important for our health. It strengthens our heart, reduces our stress levels, improves our mood and helps control our weight. However, it does not give us the license to overeat. In fact, when you think of how long you need to walk or work out on the elliptical to burn off a candy bar, it may help you think twice. Try not to use exercise as an excuse to overeat or make poor food choices. Here are some of the "great pretenders" – foods that may seem healthy, but are high in fat, sugar or calories:

- Yogurt may be low in fat but can be very high in sugar. Instead try plain yogurt and add your own fruit and cinnamon or a touch of jelly or honey.
- Yogurt covered nuts, raisins or pretzels are no better nutritionally than most candy. Enjoy a small handful of almonds or a piece of fruit for a snack instead.
- Bagels may be baked and made from wheat but many of them are the calorie equivalent of five pieces of bread. Stick to half a bagel, or scoop out most of the inside and eat more of the chewy crust. An English muffin or toast is another alternative.
- Salads consisting of a rainbow of colors from the produce aisle provide minimal calories and multiple nutrients. However, the 50 calories in your salad bowl jumps up to 500 calories when it is drowning in salad dressing and covered with croutons and cheese.

BY FOLLOWING THESE TIPS, YOU CAN STILL EAT WELL WITHOUT TARNISHING THE HALO OF THOSE HEALTHIER FOODS!

Preventive Care

Everyone needs an ounce of prevention.



Preventive health care can help you stay healthier throughout your life.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about recommendations for preventive care.

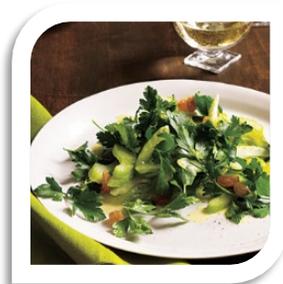
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Celery and Parsley Salad with Golden Raisins

Enjoy the journey of this recipe from beginning to end. Enjoy shopping for the ingredients, preparing the recipe and eating it. Even enjoy the process of cleaning up!

Take in all the senses as you look at the color of the ingredients, the sound of the crunch as you chew, the aroma and the taste.



Click [Here](#) to visit Cooking Light's Celery and Parsley Salad with Golden Raisins.