

A GRADUAL APPROACH to Healthy Eating

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A healthy diet is the most important component of overall health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, changing your diet can be extremely challenging. It's very rewarding in the short-term to eat unhealthy foods. It feels good to eat chips or a chocolate bar.

Broccoli feels good, but only when you look at yourself in the mirror six months in the future.

Change your diet and change your health for the better with these strategies:

1. Start with the end in mind. What is your ideal diet? This is important to figure out before going to the next step. Moving from your current diet to a ketogenic diet is very different than moving to a vegan diet.

- Do some research regarding which diets are healthy for someone with your current health status.
- Also, consider your food preferences. For example, if you love meat, a vegan diet would be quite challenging.
- See your doctor for advice.

2. Break the diet change into steps. Start slowly. **Massive change is usually too challenging to maintain.** Give yourself several months, if necessary, to completely change your diet. If you're feeling even moderately uncomfortable, you're going too fast.

- Start with small changes. For instance, you might decide to cut back on processed carbohydrates and replace those calories with beans or lentils. Keep moving the ratios in a positive direction until you've reached your goals.

3. Cut back on unhealthy foods. You can't just add in healthy foods. It's important to limit the unhealthy foods, too. Good foods add to your health, and unhealthy food steal it away.

- Imagine you eat three candy bars each day, but you only want to eat one. You could have 2.5 candy bars each day this week. Eat two the following week, and so on, until you're not eating any at all. **It's slower than you might like, but it works.**
- Make a list of all the unhealthy foods you regularly consume. Create a plan for minimizing their presence in your diet.

4. Consider your beverages, too. Beverages can be loaded with calories and unhealthy chemicals. They're easy to consume and don't take up a lot of room in your stomach. **Drink a lot of water and satisfy your thirst that way.** Wean yourself off unhealthy beverages slowly.

5. Find foods you enjoy. If your new diet calls for nuts, find some nuts that you enjoy. If you hate cashews, don't eat them. If you love apples, but don't like bananas, then don't eat bananas. Look for options that fit your diet that appeal to you.

6. Understand that perfection isn't necessary. Is a couple of candy bars each week going to be a problem? Of course not. It's not important to be 100%

perfect to gain all the health benefits a diet has to offer. If 90% of your meals conform to your diet, you're doing extremely well. 80% is decent. 70% isn't good enough.

- Avoid beating yourself up because you had an error in judgement or a weak moment.

What type of diet do you want to adopt? This is the important first step. Slowly adapt your current diet to match your new diet. **This can take several months to do effectively.** While it's tempting to make rapid changes, they simply don't work for the vast majority of the population.

Find foods you enjoy that support good health and keep your calories under control. That's really the primary goal regardless of the specific diet.