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The Binge Eating Prevention Plan

9 Ways to Eat Healthy in 2022

For healthy eating habits that stick, add what's helpful rather than dieting.

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🛡 Reviewed by Abigail Fagan

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KEY POINTS

- **Healthy eating is only partially about food. Much of eating healthy has to do with mindset and wellness habits.**

- **Making small changes of just five minutes a day can lead to long-term habits.**

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This post was written by Gia Marson, Ed.D.

The new year brings a great opportunity to set goals and review our values. Eating healthier is a common New Year's resolution, but it can be hard to stick to, especially if you don't have a plan in place. It's even harder if you're not sure what "healthy eating" really entails—and what it does not. With these nine tips, you can confidently create a healthy eating plan that will endure through 2022 and beyond.

1. Add stress relief

Stress is part of life. Unfortunately, it can have a big impact on your health. We now know that stress in the brain can have a negative impact on your gut, and vice versa, due to neuronal links that connect the two organs. This means that stress can interfere with your body's cues of hunger and fullness. But if

2. Get enough sleep

Research shows that people who get inadequate sleep have elevated levels of ghrelin (the hunger hormone) and reduced levels of leptin (a hormone that makes you experience fullness). This means that not getting enough sleep can leave you feeling hungrier and less full when you do eat and inadequate sleep is associated with binge eating. Improving your sleep hygiene may help: Turn off your phone, computer, and other screens at least an hour before bed; establish a comforting bedtime routine; set a clear boundary for wakeful hours; or begin a CBT treatment for insomnia.

3. Be more mindful

Taking a more mindful approach can help you to reduce mindless eating habits and allow you to make intentional choices about how to fuel yourself. Mindful eating focuses on being aware of what you consume and exactly how you feel: full, hungry, tired, nervous, or joyful. There's no judgment in mindful eating. Simply acknowledge how your body and mind respond to different foods, and allow yourself to make food

4. Eat for positive reasons, not fear-based ones

Fear-based messages sound like: *Avoid this! Don't do that! This will make you gain weight! This food is bad for you!* To reduce being vulnerable to developing an eating disorder and to build or maintain healthy eating habits, it's important to ignore dieting messages and start to think about food in a positive way: Food keeps me alive. Eating enables me to grow. What I eat fuels me and heals me. Choose foods that you enjoy, make your body feel good, make you happy, give you enough energy to get through the day, and offer variety for a healthy gut biome.

need water to function and think properly. Research tells us that drinking water can help promote better appetite aware-ness. For a flavor twist, try adding lemon, mint, cucumber, or an enhancer of your choice to your glass.

6. Remember that you're an expert

Other people may encourage you to try a certain new diet, give you nutritional advice, or tell you how much or how little to eat. But it's important to acknowledge that you're the ex-pert on your own mind, body, and spirit. Take the time to re-flect on what eating habits have made you feel your best and that you have been able to maintain. Learning from your past can help you set yourself up for success—and feeling good—in the future.

7. Learn more ways to cope with your emotions

Food can be used as a coping mechanism to deal with emo-tions that you'd rather not face, such as loneliness, sadness, grief, or disappointment. Instead of turning to food or dieting as a way to escape, you can learn to face inevitable difficult emotions head-on. Learning how to handle negative emo-

you—talk therapy, journaling, meditation, riding the emotion wave, to name a few—and notice how you can gain more positive control over your eating habits and increase your mental health resilience.

8. Spend time in nature

If you're looking to improve your eating habits in 2022 then getting out into nature is a great place to start. Studies have shown that being outdoors can reduce stress levels and a range of problematic symptoms related to depression, anxiety, and physical health. When your emotional and physical health are better, you're more likely to eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full.

9. Make small, simple changes

When it comes to making healthy eating decisions, you don't have to totally overhaul your life and routine. Making one 5-minute change a day can help you to maintain healthy behaviors long term. For example, build in just 5 minutes to meditate before bed, add a fruit or vegetable to each meal, pay attention to the taste of what you're eating and how it makes your body feel, or pause to tune into your hunger cues before opening the fridge.

Eating is not just about food

To eat in a way that is healthy for you requires more than increasing your veggies. Your mental state, physical condition,

rules you have been following, and make changes where needed. You'll find that your eating habits become healthier and more intuitive when the rest of your body, mind, and spirit are cared for.

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