

Make Small Dietary Shifts

People need to shift to healthier food and drink choices. Today, let's look at exactly what that means for the dietary components that can put your health at risk.

Small Shifts in Sugar:

What We Eat in America (WWEIA): We get about 13 percent of our daily calories from added sugars. Children, adolescents, and young adults consume even more. Most comes from sugar-sweetened drinks, snacks, and sweets.

Shift: The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) say to get less than 10 percent of our calories from added sugars. This means we need to shift away from sugary foods.

Examples of Shifts:

- Fruit punch to water with lemon
- Cookies to apple slices with peanut butter

Small Shifts in Saturated Fat:

WWEIA: More than two-thirds of Americans consume too much saturated fat. Much of this comes from mixed dishes that contain meat and/or cheese — think burgers, tacos, and pizza.

Shift: The DGA says to consume less than 10 percent of our calories from saturated fat. We need to shift away from full-fat dairy products, fatty meats, solid fats, and hydrogenated vegetable oils and shift toward healthier monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Examples of Shifts:

- Meat-lovers pizza with extra cheese to a veggie pie, light on the cheese

- Burrito with beef and cheese to a burrito with less beef and cheese and extra onions, peppers, and beans.

Small Shifts in Sodium:

WWEIA: American adults consume about 50% more sodium than what's recommended. Most comes from sodium added during commercial food processing and preparation. Mixed dishes like burgers, sandwiches, soups, and rice, pasta, and grain dishes are the main culprits.

Shift: A healthy eating pattern contains less than 2300mg of sodium a day. We need to shift away from convenience and prepared foods to less processed and packaged items.

Examples of Shifts:

- Boxed flavored rice to plain rice, add your favorite herbs and spices
- Burger and fries out to make your own at home, where you control the amount of salt

Remember, you don't have to make changes all at once. One by one, small shifts in what you eat can help you maintain a healthy body weight, meet nutrient needs, and decrease your risk for chronic disease.

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