



DID YOU KNOW?

Eating Healthier Can Prevent and Manage Stress

Eating foods that provide balanced nutrition gives us energy and makes us feel good. It also helps calm our brain and body when stressful things happen in our life.

It can be a challenge to eat healthy. When we are stressed, we might not be hungry at all, or we might crave potato chips and ice cream. It's not so simple these days to find food that is both healthy and affordable. Here are some tips for healthy eating.

Everyday Practices

Here are some everyday ways to eat better to help prevent and lower stress:

- Be kind to yourself.** It may be hard at times, but every little step in the right direction makes a difference.
- Make a plan and set goals for eating healthy.**
- Start small.** Pick 1-2 strategies to start.
- Make it easy to make the healthier choice.** Avoid keeping junk foods, like high sugar drinks, chips, cookies, or cake in your home, car, or workplace.
- Eat fruits and vegetables during every meal.** On your dinner plate, how about filling half of it with fruits and vegetables?
- Bring on the healthy fats and proteins.** Beans, lentils, whole grains, olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds, and fish are good for you.
- Eat regular meals.** Having a routine and not skipping meals will provide your body with energy evenly throughout the day.
- Don't focus on restriction-** it can backfire, and it's hard to do long term. Instead, think about filling up with healthier food, like fruits, vegetables, beans, or nuts. Know that it's ok to have treats sometimes.
- Make meals a social time.** Prepare and eat food as a family and/or with friends.
- Stay hydrated.** Drink water and avoid or cut down on soda and juices.
- Eat mindfully.** Sit down and enjoy the flavors and textures, and focus on chewing each bite. Before giving in to a craving, pause and take some breaths; ask yourself, is it what I really need at this moment?
- Shop with intention.** Spend more time shopping the perimeter (or the frozen section) of the grocery store to get whole foods – fruits, veggies, whole grains, and proteins – instead of processed foods.



It can be hard to find affordable food including fresh fruits, veggies, and protein. Some healthy and more affordable options include **frozen fruits and vegetables, and beans, lentils, and legumes are a great source of protein.** Many stores and farmers markets take food stamps. Find out more at ACEsAware.org/ManageStress and ecologycenter.org/fmfinder/.



Sometimes We Need *a Little* Extra Support

When you are feeling stressed, these tips can help:

- Make it easier to choose healthier foods in stressful moments by:
 - Putting high-fat, high-sugar, and/or salty foods out of sight or in a hard-to-reach place or avoid keeping them in the house (or office, car).
 - Have healthy foods high in energy, healthy fats, protein, and vitamins easily accessible, available, and ready to eat (e.g., peanuts, bananas, and grapes).



- Practice self-compassion. If we eat the brownie, ice cream, or potato chips, that's okay. Healthy nutrition is about long-term, overall healthy dietary choices.
- Consider using an app to provide healthy meal plans and recipes. Check out MyPlate.gov for a free app.
- Practice relaxation strategies throughout the day, such as mindfulness or talking to a friend or relative. So when you are feeling stressed, you will have support to turn to (instead of going straight for unhealthy foods).
- Keep physically active during the day. Learn more about ways to get physically active at ACEsAware.org/ManageStress.

Sometimes We Need *a Lot* of Extra Support

When you are going through an extra tough time, these things can help:

- Keep in mind that it's not your fault you are struggling with eating healthy. Past life experiences and current stressful experiences may be getting in your way.
- Ask a health care provider about getting extra help. They can connect you with:
 - **Community services, support groups**, and programs that can help with nutrition support
 - Advice and/or assessments for medical conditions such as diabetes
 - A **nutritionist** or **dietician**, if needed
 - **Mental health support** to identify healthier coping strategies rather than using unhealthy food, undereating, or overeating to cope with stress
 - **USDA National Hunger Hotline:** Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE or text 914-342-7744
- **CalFresh is California's food stamps (SNAP) program:** www.getcalfresh.org/en/apply
- **WIC:** www.myfamily.wic.ca.gov



FOR MORE WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS:

Visit ACEsAware.org/ManageStress or
Talk to your health care provider