

Tips that Count

Wellness information for your journey to a healthier you!

How to Start a Food Diary

One way to make sure that your diet is balanced and in moderation is to create a food diary—that is, to keep a written record of everything you eat for at least three days. Many online tools* and apps are now available and make this easier to do.

Pick three, 24-hour periods. They needn't be consecutive days, but each must accurately reflect how you normally eat. Each day, begin at 12 midnight and end at 12 midnight the following day.

Record each food and beverage item as you eat it, either online or in a small notebook that you carry with you:

- The time you ate it and the circumstances. “Lunch at work,” “evening snack,” etc.
- Record only what you've eaten. Include snacks, finger foods, and all beverages.
- Your reasons for eating. “Hungry,” “lunch time,” “boredom,” “loneliness,” and so on.
- Include all the ingredients used in preparation.
- Include product descriptions if possible. “2-percent, low-fat, cow's milk.”
- Whether the foods were modified or processed (fresh, frozen, or canned; packed in heavy syrup or natural juice or water).
- Whether each food was fried, baked, broiled, deep-fried, boiled, or steamed.
- If feasible, measure and record how much you ate. Record amounts in common household measures (teaspoons, tablespoons, cups, slices, ounces, etc.).
- Specify ingredients in prepared alcoholic drinks. “Scotch whiskey (1 oz.) and Canada Dry Club Soda (4 oz.).”

*Visit the USDA's “SuperTracker” website at: <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/default.aspx>



All information is intended for your general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for specific medical conditions. You should seek prompt medical care for any specific health issues and consult your physician before starting a new fitness regimen.