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BALANCE

A wellness update for your work, health, life

Eating healthy – for you and your budget

A healthy diet doesn't necessarily equate to an expensive diet. While it's easy to opt for a meal at your favourite restaurant or overspend on groceries, a little advanced planning can help you stretch your food dollars. Here are some action steps for a healthy nutrition plan:

- **Plan a week's worth of meals.** When planning your meals, consider how you might make use of leftovers. For example, if you plan on roasting a whole chicken on Sunday, you could reserve some chicken and serve shredded chicken tacos the next night.

- **Prepare your own convenience foods whenever possible.** Convenience foods come with a cost. Not only do canned goods tend to cost more than freshly prepared foods, they also tend to have more fat and sodium than their home-cooked counterparts. Instead of buying canned green beans, for example, wander over to the produce aisle and buy fresh ones.

- **Grow your own produce.** Planting your own vegetable garden is fun and rewarding, and you get to eat the fruits of your labour. While you can certainly spend a great deal of money starting a garden, it's also possible to grow your own fruits and veggies on a budget. For example, container gardening requires only a large pot, soil, and seeds.

- **Before you throw it away, freeze it!** All kinds of foods can be frozen and saved for later including leftovers, raw and cooked meat, bread, and fresh fruits and vegetables. If you regularly find yourself tossing out uneaten leftovers, you're throwing money away. If this is the case, freeze the extra portions and use them on those nights when you don't feel like cooking. By doing this one week out of every month, you could cut your grocery bill by up to 25 per cent!

- **Switch brand names for generic.** Generic brands are usually less expensive than their brand-name counterparts. Compare prices to make sure you're getting the best value for your money. For example, if a brand-name item is on sale, it may be cheaper than the store brand.

- **Control your impulses.** You know your weaknesses: chocolate, cookies, ice cream… so before you head to the grocery store, write out a shopping list and vow to stick to it. Picture yourself happily walking past your favourite items in favor of healthier choices. If it helps, have a healthy snack and drink a glass of water before you go grocery shopping to curb your hunger.

- **Eat out less often.** An entree, side dish, and half of an appetizer at national full-service restaurant chains contain an average of 1,495 calories, 28 grams of saturated fat, and 3,512 milligrams of sodium. If you add a beverage and half of a dessert, that single restaurant meal would represent your entire day's allotment of calories (based on 2000 calories per day, the widely accepted number for adults). In addition to the increase in calories and sodium, the expense of eating out can also add up; the average cost of a mid-range restaurant meal with wine or beer is estimated to be between $15 and $25 plus tax and tip.

In today's world, where time is precious and convenience is essential, a quick stop at a drive-through is rapidly becoming the norm. However, it's never too late to change your eating habits. Fast food might be cheap, but the tips above will also keep you within your budget while eating healthy.

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Losing weight at work: my friends and co-workers just don't get it

There never seems to be a shortage of tempting goodies stationed somewhere at work. Whether it's cupcakes, chocolate, donuts or cookies, they're everywhere! And when you're trying to lose weight, these sweet temptations could be your downfall.

But there are other culprits trying to sabotage your weight loss efforts - your co-workers. If you get caught hovering over that plate of red velvet decadence for too long, without fail someone will appear to goad you into joining them for this one guilty pleasure. And if you don't join in, you run the risk of being left out.

Are my co-workers deliberately trying to sabotage my weight-loss goals?

Here are some tips to help keep you on track and committed to improving your health:

- **Arm yourself with healthy alternatives.** The best defense is a strong offense. If the workplace tradition involves donuts every Friday morning, bring your own healthy goodies to share alongside the donut box. For example, bring a basket of low-fat, pumpkin oatmeal muffins or some other yummy and healthy treat on Friday and contribute to creating a healthier tradition.

- **Download and customize take-out menus.** While it's smarter to bring your own lunch each day, there's something to be said about the occasional take-out or lunch out with your co-workers. That doesn't mean you have to load up on a big meal. Download and print nutritional menus from your co-workers' favourite restaurants. From there, highlight items that work for your diet and order only from your list of highlighted items. You could also use a dark marker to cross off unhealthy items to remove the temptation.

- **Say no to temptation.** Birthdays, baby showers, and other events are often celebrated with goodies. By all means, join the celebration but learn how to say no to the plate of cake pushed your way. Just because it's there, it doesn't mean you have to eat it. You don't need to explain yourself either – just a simple, "That looks delicious, but not today" will do.

- **Change your mindset.** You can't change your co-workers, but you can change your own mindset. Instead of thinking of your weight loss journey as a diet, think of it as a healthy living plan. When presented with a latte, ask yourself if that supports your healthy living plan or not. As you think about all those empty calories (not to mention the caffeine and added expense), you may conclude that no, that latte actually doesn't support your healthy living plan. You'll likely find that it's easier to say no once your own attitude towards dieting has been adjusted.

You are in charge of your health

Finally, remember that you are in charge of your health, not your friends or your co-workers. While it would be nice to have 100 per cent support and encouragement, not everyone will understand. Some will support you, some will be inspired to join you, and others will continue to offer you donuts. How you respond is ultimately your choice and within your power. You can do it!

Looking for additional support? Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EFAP at **1 800 387-4765** or visit workhealthlife.com.

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Did you know?

- Over 60 per cent of women in the United States are estimated to be overweight
- In Canada, two out of three men are overweight, and one-in-four adults is obese
- 54 per cent of American adult survey respondents reported that they were trying to lose weight
- Cultural reasons for obesity issues include larger portion sizes, reliance on cars rather than walking, and little time for exercise and cooking
- Canada's Food Guide can help you and your family learn about food groups, serving sizes, and making healthy food choices

Resources:

http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/index-eng.php
http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/overweight-weight-loss.html
http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/shopping-epicerie-eng.php#a2
http://www.caloriecontrol.org/press-room/trends-and-statistics
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/1_1_1-eng.phpx
http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/49712071.pdf
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php

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