

# OnTrack to Wellness

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April 2017

Nutrition is about more than just maintaining a healthy weight. Eating the right foods can help you feel your best, reduce inflammation and even improve brain function.

It can be challenging to know what to eat when pop culture and fad diets often send mixed signals. In this edition of *OnTrack to Wellness*, we help you separate fact from fiction when it comes to nutrition and provide tips on eating well, so you can be sure you're always making the right choice.

## Common Misconceptions About What You Eat

We tackle two common misconceptions about nutrition. Read on to learn more.

### 1 Do "Fatty" Foods Cause Weight Gain?

Yes and no. While foods with unhealthy fats like cheeseburgers and French fries do the body more harm than good, the term "fat" gets a bad reputation. Foods advertised as "fat-free" have been promoted as "health" foods, but eliminating fat entirely isn't necessarily healthy.

The University of Maryland Medical Center notes that healthy fats play a crucial role in brain function, and can also lower risk of heart disease, cancer and arthritis. The challenge we face is that our body needs them to survive, but doesn't naturally make them. That's where eating foods high in omega-3 and omega-6 come in.

Try to incorporate some of the following foods into your daily diet:

- Fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel and trout)
- Kale
- Brussels sprouts
- Nut oils
- Flaxseed
- Oatmeal
- Pumpkin seeds

### 2 Does Skipping Meals Help You Lose Weight?

Not necessarily. While some research suggests that intermittent fasting can help prevent weight gain, scientists agree that the best way to lose weight is by reducing your calorie intake each day.

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, when your body enters "starvation" mode, it begins a complex process that deteriorates muscle tissues. Muscle helps you burn excess fat in your body, so "starving" can lead to weight gain, and other unpleasant health issues like dehydration, bad breath and tooth decay. And, when we're extremely hungry, we're more likely to overeat, so those calories you saved by skipping lunch won't matter if you double them at dinner.

If you're considering fasting as a weight loss option or practice fasting for religious reasons, **talk to your doctor about your plan**. You'll want to ensure you know the difference between fasting and starving yourself.

Learn more on the next page >>

## Top Six Ways to Set Good Nutrition Habits

Making small changes to your everyday eating routine can make a big difference to your health.

### 1. DRINKS

Switch from soda or bottled juices to water with lemon, or natural pressed fruit juices.



### 2. COFFEE

If you need coffee every morning, try reducing the amount of cream or sugar, or omitting both altogether.



### 3. LUNCH

Think about replacing the bread in your sandwich with a low-fat wrap.



### 4. AFTERNOON SNACK

Try a piece of fruit paired with a tablespoon of peanut butter to feel satisfied all afternoon.



### 5. DINNER

Switch your dinner plates out for salad plates. The smaller size will help trick your mind into feeling full with smaller portions.



### 6. DESSERT

Instead of having ice cream, try a natural frozen yogurt with no added sugar, or a serving of fruit topped with natural whipped cream.



### Check Food Labels Before You Buy

Products that may seem healthy on the outside can contain added sugar and many calories per serving. Beware of healthy-seeming foods such as certain Greek yogurts, smoothies, energy/protein bars, and even condiments like salad dressing and ketchup.

Granola is a good example of a deceiving “health” food. It’s been touted as a healthy substitute to chips and other snacks, but a study conducted by [Berkley University Health Studies](#) showed that half a cup of granola can contain nearly 300 calories and 2.5 tablespoons of added sugar.

Before you buy, look at the label to see how much added sugar it contains. The results may surprise you.



### Want to Learn More About Planning Healthy Meals?

Visit the [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) website to find out how you can plan better meals at home and on the go.