

If you have questions, ask your care team.

Food Diary

A food diary is a record of everything you eat and drink throughout the day. Keeping a food diary can help you become more aware of your eating choices and habits. It can show you:

- What you eat
- How much you eat and drink
- When you eat
- Calories and nutrients that you are eating

It can help you identify ways to improve your diet.

Benefits

Keeping a food diary may also be helpful for people who want to lose weight. Studies show that keeping a food diary can be a useful tool for weight loss, and can help people lose more weight.

Although a food diary is helpful for some people, it may not work well for everyone. If you have an eating disorder or any questions about whether keeping a food diary would be helpful for you, ask your healthcare team.

How to keep a food diary

Record what you eat and drink each day. Write down the time, the types of foods, and how much you are eating and drinking.

Use tools like a food scale and measuring cups to measure your portion sizes. If you do not have those tools on hand, try estimating your portions:

- One cup = 1 average-sized fist
- 1/2 cup = 1 small, scooped handful
- 3 ounces = palm of your hand
- 1 tablespoon = 1 thumb
- 1 teaspoon = tip of pointer finger

After you have completed a few days of your food diary, review what you wrote. Think about what changes you can make to improve your diet.

If you prefer to keep an electronic food log, you can use apps such as MyFitnessPal®, Lose It!®, and MyNetDiary®. Most of these tools will automatically calculate how many calories and nutrients you are eating and drinking.

Tips for healthy eating

Here are a few tips for healthy eating that may be helpful:

- **Eat more fruits and vegetables.**

Most people can aim to eat 2 cups of fruits and 3 cups of vegetables each day.

- **Choose whole grains.**

At least half of all the grains you eat should be whole grains.

- **Choose low-fat dairy.**

Low-fat dairy is lower in saturated fat than whole-fat dairy. Instead of whole-fat dairy products, try low-fat dairy such as low-fat milk and low-fat yogurt.

- **Choose lean protein.**

Lean protein is lower in saturated fat than high-fat protein. Instead of high-fat protein, try low-fat, lean protein such as chicken, fish, seafood, soy, legumes (such as beans and lentils), nuts and seeds. Also, make sure your lean protein is not deep fried.

- **Choose unsweetened beverages.**

Sweetened beverages like regular soda, sports drinks and juice have a lot of sugar and calories. Instead of sweetened beverages, try unsweetened beverages such as water, sparkling water, unsweetened coffee and tea.

- **Do not drink too much alcohol.**

Females should not drink more than 1 serving of alcoholic beverages a day. Males should not drink more than 2 servings per day. A serving is 1 1/2 ounces (1 shot glass) of hard liquor, 5 ounces of wine or 12 ounces of beer.

For more information about healthy eating and to get a healthy eating plan, go to myplate.gov/myplate-plan