5 Dietitians on the One Nutrition Tweak You Should Make

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March 1, 2018
TIME Health

For many people, “eating better” is an intimidating and abstract concept. What counts as healthy? Is calorie counting necessary? Is all junk food off limits?

This confusion is familiar to many people, but improving your nutrition doesn’t always have to mean a diet overhaul. In fact, sometimes small changes can make the biggest impact. In honor of National Nutrition Month this March, TIME asked registered dietitians for five quick and easy diet resets that will put you on the path to better health.

EMBRACE FAT.

“Most people think all fats can negatively impact health. But in reality, unsaturated fats—monounsaturated and polyunsaturated, i.e. omega-3 fatty acids—are known as the “good fats” and have been shown to reduce inflammation and aid in heart health. Some great options to incorporate into your meals and snacks include nuts, seeds, avocados, fish (like salmon) and vegetable oils, like olive and canola.” — Stephanie Perruzza, registered dietitian and health and wellness specialist at KIND snacks

EAT MORE PLANTS.

“About 95% of Americans don’t consume enough fiber. Veggies, fruits and whole grains are the best way to do this. It’s often easier to focus on what we can add in versus take away, so this is a great way to shift the mindset and focus on something positive. People should ultimately aim for seven to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables
each day. That may seem like a lot, but it’s actually very doable if you are including vegetables and fruits at each meal.” — Mascha Davis, Los Angeles-based registered dietitian

DON’T CUT OUT CARBS.

“Have a healthy—meaning fiber-containing—carbohydrate at all meals. I speak to lots of folks who choose carb-free meals, like a green salad with chicken for lunch, and then are left feeling low-energy, distracted and craving a cookie soon after. We need carbs to replenish our blood sugar levels and keep us alert. I always recommend making sure you have at least a small portion of sweet potato, quinoa, brown rice, etc. with your meals to make sure you are getting the nutrients your body needs to function. This is especially important for folks who exercise often and burn through their blood sugar reserves regularly.” — Matt Priven, Boston-based registered dietitian

SIT DOWN WHEN YOU EAT.

“Eat all meals and snacks from a plate while seated at a table. This naturally helps you eat less and enjoy it more. Practicing not eating while standing in front of the fridge, driving in a car, working at the computer or watching TV helps us stay more mindful about what and how much we’re eating. It’s a small behavior tweak that can naturally impact portions and enjoyment.” — Dawn Jackson Blatner, Chicago-based registered dietitian

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY.

“The one tweak I wish everyone could make is to eat while better listening to their bodies by using what I call the Hunger Quotient [a 1-to-10 scale for hunger, with a goal of staying between four and six]. It can be a challenge to learn, but as soon as you get a hang of truly listening to your body’s hunger cues, you can feel empowered making better food and eating decisions everyday, and maintaining a healthy weight by living a nutritious lifestyle, rather than following an ultra-strict diet.” — Keri Glassman, New York City-based registered dietitian