

How to keep a diet diary

June 19 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



TUESDAY, June 19, 2018 (HealthDay News) —To some people, keeping a food diary might seem old hat or just another busy-work task on your diet to-do list. But when done correctly (and diligently), it's a

very effective tool for losing weight and keeping it off.

Studies show that dieters who monitor their eating and [weight](#) the most consistently achieve the most [weight loss](#). Essentials include writing down everything you eat and drink, and keeping a running tab on those calories.

You might find it easier to stay on track by writing down what you plan to eat each day in advance and using the diary as a menu to follow. If instead you plan to jot down details as you go, be sure to make your entries as you start to eat or at the latest within 10 minutes. After that, it's easy to forget details (read: some of the calories).

When first starting to keep a diet diary also note when you ate (what is a scheduled meal or an impulsive snack, for instance), the emotions you were feeling, and even where you were and who you were with. These details will help you uncover eating habits that may have led to weight gain, showing when and why you tend to eat extra calories. Becoming aware of your unique triggers can help you know when you're about to eat for reasons other than hunger.

You might also record exercise stats in the same diary to keep all positive lifestyle habits in one place. Include your diet goals—and make note whenever you reach one.

Sample goal entries:

- Eat salmon every Thursday.
- Switch from whole to 2 percent milk.
- Increase treadmill sessions to 20 minutes.

If you love your smartphone or tablet, consider an app that lets you create your diary on your mobile device. Some calculate the calories of

thousands of foods for you and let you track your weight. But pen and paper work just as well if you like the methodical act of journaling.

The bottom line is that consistency with maintaining your diary is more important than the method you use.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has ideas to [improve eating habits](#) that you can use along with journaling to get the most from a food diary.

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