

# Take small bites toward better nutrition

March 4 2020, by Paul Schattenberg

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Developing better habits to improve overall nutrition can be done bit by bit — or bite by bite. Credit: Texas A&M AgriLife photo

Good nutrition doesn't have to be difficult or restrictive, and achieving good eating habits can be done bit by bit or, more accurately, bite by bite, said Jenna Anding, Ph.D., a registered dietician nutritionist with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

"March is [National Nutrition Month](#), which is an annual campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This year's theme, "Eat Right, Bite by Bite," emphasizes that making small changes can

have a [positive impact](#) on our diets and our health," said Anding.

## **Take 'small bites' and be food smart**

Anding said people often try to change their diet by making drastic changes that may not be sustainable, leading to frustration. She said the goal of healthy eating can be more attainable using the Eat Right, Bite by Bite approach of making one or two small, but permanent, changes to existing eating habits. Examples of simple changes one can make include drinking more water instead of sweetened drinks, eating one more vegetable or fruit each day, and preparing more meals at home.

Anding said being smart about the nutritional content of foods for yourself and your family is also important.

"Consumers should read [food](#) labels to determine whether they have too much salt, sugar, saturated fat or calories for their needs," she said.

"Reading the nutrition facts panel can help you make better food choices when shopping."

## **Plan and create healthy meals**

"Planning meals and having some control over when and where you serve them can help improve your eating habits," Anding said. "Try to eat as a family as often as possible and without the television or other electronics to help minimize distractions. Encourage children to be involved in the planning and preparation as much as they are able as this gives parents an opportunity to talk to them about [good nutrition](#)."

Anding said there are many nutritious, cost-effective, easy-to-make recipes on AgriLife Extension's [Dinner Tonight](#) website.

For those who eat out, think ahead and plan where you will eat, Anding said.

"Look for restaurants with a wide range of menu items, including 'lighter fare' choices," she said. "If items have nutrition information, compare calories and any other details provided. Choose fried foods less often and instead try to find items that are baked, broiled, grilled, roasted, poached or steamed. Don't be afraid to ask for lunch or child-sized portions or a to-go box if food portions are too large."

Improving dietary habits can be transformative, Anding said.

"It can make a [significant difference](#) in the way people feel—improving their energy, lowering their risk for chronic disease, and improving health and quality of life."

She said while AgriLife Extension offers programs to help people improve their [eating habits](#), consulting with a registered nutritionist can be beneficial for individuals who need one-on-one [nutrition](#) advice.

**More information:** To find a registered dietician locally, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at [www.eatright.org/find-an-expert](http://www.eatright.org/find-an-expert).

Provided by Texas A&M University

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