



FOOD STEPS

A GUIDE FOR WOMEN
WHO DON'T WANT
TO CHANGE THE
WAY THEY EAT



FOOD STEPS: A Guide To Eating Better

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**What this
guide is
about.**

We know you **don't** want to change your eating habits, and we don't expect you to. We are not trying to get you to change how you eat. We only want you to *take some time to think* about it.

What this guide will **not** do:

- give you advice about what to eat
- tell you how to change what you eat
- lecture you about your eating habits.

What this guide **will** do:

- give you facts about healthy eating
- get you to think about what you eat and why.

Remember: We're not asking you to change your eating habits. We just want you to keep an open mind as you read this guide.

IMPORTANT

This guide should **NOT** be used by:

- men
- anyone under 19 years of age
- pregnant women, and women who must follow a diet for medical reasons.

If you need a special diet, ask your doctor to refer you to a Registered Dietitian.

Why should I read this guide? I don't want to change how I eat.



We asked some women why they didn't want to change what they eat. Do any of these sound familiar?

"I don't have time to eat healthy foods."

Sarah Student

"I like food that tastes good. Healthy food just doesn't taste good."

Linda Teacher

"My family is fussy about what they eat. I have to cook what they want to keep the peace."

Betty Payroll Clerk

You're probably like Sarah, Linda and Betty, and you don't want to change what you eat. That's okay. We only want to give you a few facts about healthy eating that you may not know about.

**How should I
use this guide?**

**What do
some women
think healthy
eating means?**



Other women who have read this booklet have suggested reading it like this: **First**, skim through the booklet to get an idea of what it's about. **Then**, read it slowly and see how it applies to you and your life.

We asked Sarah, Linda and Betty what healthy eating meant to them. Here is what they said:

Sarah: "Healthy eating means never eating fast foods or "junk"foods."

Linda: "Healthy eating means giving up my favourite foods."

Betty: "Healthy eating means having to eat a lot of new foods I probably won't like. It means changing how I eat."

Sarah, Linda and Betty have similar ideas about healthy eating. Maybe you agree with them, but that's not what healthy eating is about. Read on to find out more.

What does healthy eating really mean?



What are the keys to healthy eating?

Healthy eating means:

- being able to eat *all* your favourite foods at home and in restaurants
- having *no forbidden* foods
- making *small changes* in the way you prepare your favourite foods to make them healthier
- choosing smaller portions of some of your favourite foods
- eating new foods *only if you want to*.

Healthy eating is about choice, balance and moderation. What does this mean?

- **Choice**, means you enjoy many different kinds of foods to get all the energy and nutrients you need.
- **Balance**, means you:
 - eat regular meals and snacks
 - enjoy *mainly* nutritious foods and a *few* “junk” foods now and again
 - neither over-eat nor under-eat.
- **Moderation**, means you:
 - choose less fast foods and “junk” foods
 - choose foods with less fat to protect you against heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes.

Choice, balance and moderation are the keys to healthy eating.

**Now I'm
confused.**



**The answers
are in Canada's
Food Guide To
Healthy Eating.**



**You mean that I *can* eat fast foods and “junk”
foods?**

Yes, *all* foods can be part of a healthy diet. It's *how much* of these foods you eat and *how often* you eat them that you have to think about. Fast foods and “junk” foods are usually high in calories and can be low in nutrients. However, if you eat them now and again and balance them with more nutritious foods, then they can be part of a healthy diet.

**I don't know what to believe. There seems to be a
new message about healthy eating every year.**

It's true there have been a lot of messages and they can be confusing. It's just that researchers keep learning more and more about how food affects our health so, there is always new information.

Canada's Food Guide To Healthy Eating

can help you make sense of all the messages. It will help you understand healthy eating. It was developed by health experts as the one set of nutrition guidelines for everyone over the age of four. It explains how you can stay healthy and prevent illness by eating a variety of wholesome foods.

**What's in it
for me?**

**Why do I eat
the way I do?**



What would I gain from eating better?

The answer is easy. If you ate better, you would have better health and more energy. You would also have the key to reaching a healthy weight and staying there -- without dieting.

**Maybe healthy eating isn't as bad as I thought,
but I still don't want to change my eating habits.**

That's okay. But do you know *why* you choose to eat in ways that may not be good for you? We asked Sarah, Linda and Betty their reasons. Their answers to this question are listed on the next few pages. Which ones apply to you?

Sarah: I haven't got time to eat better!

Whether you're eating on the run or looking for quick meals to make at home, you can eat healthy food. Nutritious, convenience foods that are ready-to-eat, can make meal preparation quick and simple. And if you're eating out, restaurants and even fast food chains offer healthy food choices. Many of them will also prepare foods the way you want them.



Linda: Wouldn't I have to cook a lot of new foods for my family?

Not at all! You don't need to buy or prepare new foods. You can easily make changes to your favourite meals to make them healthier.



Betty: I can't afford a healthy diet!

You can actually save money eating a healthy diet! You don't have to buy special products and many of the most nutritious foods are among the cheapest - vegetables, fruits, breads, cereals, lean meats, and dairy products. The ready-to-eat and packaged foods are the ones that usually cost more money.

Sarah: I like food that tastes good. Healthy food is bland and boring!

Not any more! Healthy eating doesn't mean giving up taste! Lots of healthy foods taste great. Besides, healthy eating is about making *small changes* to your favourite meals.



Linda: When I eat out, I eat what I like!

Eating well doesn't mean that you can't eat your favourite foods. It's how *often* you eat out, what you *choose*, and *how much* of it you eat, that makes the difference to your weight and health.



**Some women
feel they will
eat better
when they
need to.**



**Betty: When I'm stressed or upset, I
need comfort foods!**

Eating comfort foods when you're stressed may make you feel better - at first. If you eat when you're upset though, you might over-eat. Then you can end up gaining weight, which gives you something else to worry about! In the end, your comfort foods may become just another source of stress!

Sarah, Linda and Betty have given some of the reasons why they eat the way they do. And maybe, you could relate to them. Some women though, feel that what they eat doesn't affect their health or, they will eat better when it does. Do any of the comments on the next few pages sound like you?

**Sarah: My weight is okay. Why should I
worry about what I eat?**

Your weight is important, but so is your health. By eating well, you can maintain your weight, increase your energy and your sense of well-being. You can even reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer.



Linda: I have been eating what I like for years and I'm still healthy.

There are many factors involved in staying healthy. Family history, smoking, alcohol, inactivity, and nutrition all affect your health. Your eating habits are just one part, but it's one you can control. If you eat well, you can lower your risk of getting these diseases:

- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- some cancers
- obesity
- diabetes
- osteoporosis.

Even if you are in good health now, it makes sense to eat well so you can stay that way.



Betty: I thought women didn't have to worry about heart disease?

Many women think heart disease only affects men. But heart disease is the number one killer of women, and it is rising. About 15,000 women in Ontario die from heart disease each year.

The same factors that put men at risk for heart disease also affect women:

- high blood cholesterol
- smoking

- high blood pressure
- lack of physical activity
- obesity
- diabetes.

And, after menopause, the risk of heart disease becomes even greater. So yes - women *do* have to worry about heart disease.



Sarah: What can you do? It seems that everything you eat causes cancer.

Not true! The good news is that eating well can *protect* you from getting some cancers. Cancers of the breast, ovary, colon, and kidney are linked to eating a high-fat diet. But eating fresh fruits and vegetables and foods with more fibre and less fat, have been found to actually *lower* your risk of these and other cancers.

Linda: I'll eat a healthy diet when I'm pregnant.

Often you don't know right away when you're pregnant, so it's important to eat well before you get pregnant as well as during pregnancy. Also, eating well can help you gain the right amount of weight during your pregnancy. It can also help you return to your normal weight after the baby is born.

**Ready or
not?**



You have given me some good information, but I'm still not ready yet to change my eating habits.

That's okay. Lots of women aren't ready to change their eating habits. It's just not the "right" time for them to start eating better. Still, you never know when the right time may come along, so it never hurts to keep an open mind.

In the meantime...you have heard Sarah, Linda and Betty's reasons why they don't want to change the way they eat; what are yours?

**To find out more about why
you eat the way you do, try the
"Food For Thought"
Activity on the next page**

It's fun to do and you may learn something about yourself!



FOOD STEPS 1 ACTIVITY

Food For Thought

Below are some statements about your eating habits. Read each statement, then circle the number beside it that matches your answer. These numbers are your scores for each answer.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = somewhat disagree

3 = somewhat agree

4 = strongly agree

Example: I like spotted dogs.

1 2 3 ④

A. I would eat less fried foods if I really
 thought it would be good for me.

1 2 3 4

B. I am more likely to eat “junk” foods than
 healthy foods when I am upset.

1 2 3 4

C. My weight is more important to me than
 having a healthy diet.

1 2 3 4

D. It takes too much time to prepare healthy
 meals.

1 2 3 4

E. I love the taste of fried foods.

1 2 3 4

F. I would eat better if my family were
 interested in healthy eating.

1 2 3 4

FOOD STEPS 1 ACTIVITY

1 = strongly disagree
2 = somewhat disagree

3 = somewhat agree
4 = strongly agree

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| G. It doesn't matter what I eat. If I am going to get heart disease, I will get heart disease. | 1 2 3 4 |
| H. When I've had a bad day, I binge on "junk" foods rather than healthy foods. | 1 2 3 4 |
| I. As long as my weight is okay, I eat what I like. I don't worry about what foods are good for me. | 1 2 3 4 |
| J. I'm too busy to think about whether I'm eating healthy foods or not. | 1 2 3 4 |
| K. To control my weight, I skip meals rather than cut down on fatty foods. | 1 2 3 4 |
| L. When I'm feeling down, I'm more likely to eat foods that I shouldn't eat. | 1 2 3 4 |
| M. I would change my eating habits if I thought that eating better was good for me. | 1 2 3 4 |

FOOD STEPS 1 ACTIVITY

1 = strongly disagree

2 = somewhat disagree

3 = somewhat agree

4 = strongly agree

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------|
| N. | My family gives me a hard time when I make foods they don't like. | 1 2 3 4 |
| O. | Most foods just don't taste right unless they have butter, gravy or mayonnaise on them. | 1 2 3 4 |
| P. | I don't have time to change how I eat. | 1 2 3 4 |
| Q. | A meal isn't really complete without a rich dessert at the end. | 1 2 3 4 |
| R. | My family would give me a hard time if I prepared healthy meals. | 1 2 3 4 |

Scoring. Add up your scores like this:

A	___	+	G	___	+	M	=	___	→	Category 1
B	___	+	H	___	+	L	=	___	→	Category 2
C	___	+	I	___	+	K	=	___	→	Category 3
D	___	+	J	___	+	P	=	___	→	Category 4
E	___	+	O	___	+	Q	=	___	→	Category 5
F	___	+	N	___	+	R	=	___	→	Category 6

(You're right; we scrambled the questions so you couldn't guess the answers!)

Circle those categories that have scores ***higher*** than 8. If you have any, read the

FOOD STEPS 1 ACTIVITY

description below for that category. If your score is lower than 8 then that category probably doesn't apply to you.

Category 1 You eat high-fat foods because you don't believe that they affect your health. You believe that disease is caused by outside things -- not by what you eat. You conclude that there's nothing you can do about it.

Category 2 You eat when you are stressed or upset. Fatty foods like chocolate, ice cream, chips or fries are comforting to you. They make you feel better.

Category 3 Your appearance is very important to you. You are more concerned with managing your weight than with managing your health. You think that if your weight is okay, then you don't need to worry about what you eat.

Category 4 You eat on the run. You don't think your busy lifestyle gives you any time to plan for healthy meals. When you're hungry or in a hurry, you grab whatever is handiest -- usually fast foods and "junk" foods.

Category 5 You eat high-fat foods because you enjoy them. You like the crisp, spicy flavour of fried foods and the sensation of rich, creamy textures in your mouth. These textures appeal to you and make you feel pampered.

Category 6 You don't like being hassled, so you feed your family what *they* like. You know that what they like may not always be the healthiest choice for them, or for you.

Now what?



**Changing
the way you
eat may not
be easy.**

The “Food For Thought” quiz has helped you identify some reasons why you eat the way you do. Whatever the reason you *choose* to eat the way you do, one day you may consider trying to eat better.

Here are some reasons why women begin to think about changing their eating habits:

- they want to lose weight
- they develop a health problem, like diabetes
- they’re always tired and they want more energy
- their doctors tell them to start eating better
- someone they know dies of heart disease
- their kids or family members are afraid of them dying of cancer
- they worry they won’t be around to enjoy their grandchildren and their retirement.

Changing your eating habits can be a slow process. Dr. James Prochaska, a psychologist, found that women go through several stages before they finally change a behaviour. You go through these stages whether you are trying to stop drinking or smoking, or trying to change how you eat.

Helping people change.



Here are the stages you will likely go through if you decide to improve the way you eat:

Stage 1: You're not even thinking about changing how you eat. ***You are likely at this stage.***

Stage 2: You begin to think about reasons for changing your eating habits. ***This is the stage we hope you will move to next.***

Stage 3: You actually start eating better.

Stage 4: You make healthy eating a permanent part of your life.

We developed four guides based on these stages. They are all aimed at helping people change their eating habits. We followed Dr. Prochaska's advice, and we have only provided the information for one stage at a time. That's why this book doesn't give you advice on what you should or shouldn't be eating. It also doesn't tell you how to prepare the food you like, so it is healthier. It would take us several pages to do this, and, at this stage, you likely wouldn't read any more!

Change takes time!



It is important to know that it often takes more than one attempt to change a habit. Also, you may not go through the stages smoothly. You may go through all the stages quickly, or you may go back and forth. This happens to many people. This *does not mean* that you are failing or that you shouldn't keep trying. Every time you go through the stages, you improve your chances of eating better for life. The more often you try, the more likely you are to succeed!

A few last thoughts.



We hope this guide has helped you think about your eating habits. We hope it made you more aware of why you eat the way you do. We hope that now you can see some of the benefits of healthy eating, and see that changing isn't as hard as you may have thought.

Looking ahead.



When you started reading this guide you weren't thinking of changing your eating habits. Perhaps now, you could at least *imagine* eating better in the future.

The next booklet in the series is called:

***FOOD STEPS 2: A Guide For Women
Who Are Thinking About Changing
The Way They Eat***

It helps you think about the amount of fat you eat. It provides more information on healthy eating, and spells out the pros and cons of eating better.

If you think you are **ready** to move to this step, then order the next booklet. We tell you how below.

If you are **not ready** to think about changing your eating habits, you can still order the next booklet anyway. What have you got to lose? It's free, and it may answer questions that this booklet didn't.

In the end, it's your decision. It's all up to you.

You can order your ***FOOD STEPS 2*** Guide by telephone or by mail. The enclosed ORDER FORM has our address and phone number.

GOOD LUCK!



For More Information

About the *FOOD STEPS* Program:

- Call the organization stamped on the back cover of this guide and ask for the *FOOD STEPS* Program.

For reliable information on Nutrition and Your Health:

- Call a Public Health Dietitian or Public Health Nutritionist at your local Public Health Unit.
- Call a Registered Dietitian at your local hospital or community health centre.
- Visit the web site of the Dietitians of Canada at www.dietitians.ca
- Visit the web site of Publications, Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- Call the Heart Health Resource Centre 1-800-267-6817 for information and a Heart Health Contact in your area.

For more information about:

- A private practice dietitian in your area, call your local Public Health Unit.
- Nutrition and heart disease, call your local chapter of the Heart And Stroke Foundation of Ontario.
- Nutrition and cancer, call your local chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society of Ontario.

FOOD STEPS: A Guide To Eating Better

FOOD STEPS 1:

A Guide For Women Who Don't Want To Change The Way They Eat

This guide invites you to think about why you eat the way you do.

FOOD STEPS 2:

A Guide For Women Who Are Thinking About Changing The Way They Eat

This guide helps you look at the pros and cons of eating better and asks you to decide if you're ready to change your eating habits.

FOOD STEPS 3:

A Guide For Women Who Are Ready To Reduce The Amount Of Fat They Eat

This guide helps you eat less fat. It gives you a 10 week, step-by-step Action Plan to reduce your fat intake, and helps you identify and deal with things that tempt you to eat a lot of high-fat foods.

FOOD STEPS 4:

A Guide For Women Who Want To Keep A Low-Fat Way of Eating

This guide shows you how to keep your low-fat way of eating for good.



For More Information Contact:

