

NUTRITION ACTION PLAN: A Place to Start!

To be healthy, there are some basic things we ALL need to be doing. Other aspects of our diets are more flexible and unique to each of us. Reclaiming our health - with our DIET leading the way - is a JOURNEY. **Start where you are**, and keep taking steps to improve over time. Check out the list below and see where you are on each one. I'm sending this early so you can already be thinking about it. We will address these during our first nutrition phone chat. We can schedule additional calls, as needed, to check in, fine-tune and further develop your plan. I look forward to helping you on this health journey! -Julie Cottrell, MS, RD, LD

Beverages:

- Make WATER your main beverage. "Crowd out" other choices by simply drinking more water.
- Coffee and tea (black or with acceptable "add-ins") are also a great choice.
- Begin reading labels on your favorite beverages to check for sugar, sucralose, aspartame or saccharin. These are all ingredients to avoid. Better options have stevia, erythritol or monk fruit.

Meal Pattern:

- Two to three distinct meals or "eating increments" is best for most people.
- The number of meals you eat can change from day to day. We will talk about your daily routine to find a pattern/structure that can work for you.
- Your body also needs downtime between meals. Grazing all day is rarely a good plan!

Eat more whole foods and less processed foods

- Whole versions of foods promote health; highly processed versions usually do the opposite. For example, an apple is better than apple juice; grilled chicken is better than a chicken nugget; a potato is better than potato chips or French fries; real cheese is better than "cheese sauce".
- Whole foods have nutrients that are "intact", and may contain fiber, plus many other nutrients. They are more filling too; you are less likely to overeat them.
- Not ALL processed foods are harmful; there are some that can save time and effort, and also still have "life-giving" properties. Check the ingredients lists; short lists are best!

Choose your fats carefully.

- Fat can be a healthy part of the diet. It provides satiety, has little effect on insulin and blood sugar, it helps us absorb nutrients, and may decrease inflammation in our bodies.
- Choose fats that are the **least processed**. Avoid the highly processed "seed oils".
A few to include: olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil, and REAL butter.
A few to avoid: soybean, sunflower, safflower, corn, canola, cottonseed and "vegetable oil blends".
- Ultra processed foods, fast foods and foods at most restaurants are prepared with unhealthy, processed oils. Cook more foods at home to have better control of what goes into your body.

Prioritize protein in your diet.

- It's important to eat plenty of quality protein foods.
- Your body has a minimum amount needed daily (or as an average of several days); being "protein-focused" at some meals can help you get enough. We can talk more about this!
- Protein also promotes satiety (feeling full and satisfied), which helps with ANY diet plan!

Reduce carbs and sugars.

- Carbs and sugars are EASY foods to eat, and most of us eat too many. Simply eating LESS of these is a good place to start.
- When carbs/sugars are available in your bloodstream, your body does not easily burn fat. There is limited storage capacity for this form of energy, so it must be burned first. Reducing carbs helps your body BURN BODY FAT instead.
- One powerful diet strategy is to "save carbs" for just one meal/day. With this strategy, breakfast and lunch are usually very low carb (VLC); you may then enjoy more carbs at dinner.
- "Keto" plans keep carbs low ALL the time. For some, this can be the winning strategy.