

Taking Control Choose the Path of Healthy Food Choices

By **Holli Seabury**

Recent national studies show obesity rates continue to climb and the number of new cases of type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke and hypertension could increase 10 times between 2010 and 2020 – and then double again by 2030. These are scary statistics.

The good news is that about 85% of disease is related to lifestyle choice, and nutrition is a huge part of lifestyle. The foods we are putting in our body are having a direct impact on whether or not we will live a healthy life. We have control over what we eat, and as a result we have a huge amount of control over our own health. The key is taking that control and making healthy choices.

What messages can help us take control and make better nutritional choices? I've been working with a group of about 35 employees at a large corporation in Fort Wayne. They have been exercising at work, and I talk with them about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. We are about halfway through a 16-week program (as of the end of September) and together they have lost 571 pounds! The best part was when I asked them how they were feeling after their lifestyle changes and heard a resounding chorus of "Great!"

Two keys

What they are doing is simple – moving more and making better food choices. I'm giving them a very straightforward message to eat whole foods. The easiest way I have found to describe a whole food is that it's a food that walked on the earth or grew in the earth. There are no fields of potato chips or frozen entrees growing anywhere, or cans of pop ripening on trees. Broccoli, chicken, carrots, beans – these all walked on the earth or grew in the earth and are whole foods when they are eaten in their original state. When chicken becomes a breaded deep-fried chicken nugget or a potato becomes a tater tot, these are processed foods.

These people are all busy professionals, so we talk about easy ways to eat real food, drink lots of water and avoid processed food and soft drinks. They have come up with lots of ideas – broiling chicken on the weekends to eat for lunch throughout the week and hard-boiling eggs for a quick breakfast. They are stocking their desks with fresh fruit and nuts instead of candy and cookies, and taking regular water breaks together.

It's also incredibly important to get children on the right

track with developing healthy eating habits. For the most part, what we eat as adults is a result of how we ate growing up. If we grew up in a home where portion control and healthy choices were modeled, those will be the habits we carry into adulthood.

With children and teens, anything we say is secondary to what they see us do. As parents or grandparents, the best message we can ever give children is leading by example and letting them see us make good nutritional choices.



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All together now

As we are making those good nutritional choices, we should talk about them with our children. One of the best places to discuss nutrition is at the family table. Research shows that children who eat with their parents at least three times a week have better nutrition and lower rates of childhood obesity, in addition to a number of other social and emotional benefits.

As we are cooking dinner we can reinforce those healthy choices by saying, "Let's choose a healthy vegetable for this dinner – what vegetable would you like to eat tonight?" Give positive reinforcement when children make their own healthy choices by saying, "You chose an apple as a snack? Way to go, that's a great healthy choice." When grocery shopping with children, don't just say no to buying junk food; explain why. "I know candy tastes good, but it's very unhealthy for children's bodies and teeth, so we don't buy it. Let's choose a healthy snack together."

So many things that impact each of us are decided by others, but every day we have control over what we choose to eat and what our children will eat. By developing healthy habits, we will not only increase our quality of life, but we will have a direct impact on the next generation as we instill healthy habits in our children. Choose to take control!

INFORMATION LINK

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