

## Diet: Keeping a Food Diary

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The information you record in your food diary will help you and your family doctor design an eating program to meet your special needs. These instructions will help you get the most out of your food diary. Generally, food diaries are meant to be used for a whole week, but studies have shown that even keeping track of what you eat for 1 day can help you make changes in your diet.

**How-Much:**

In this space indicate the amount of the particular food item you ate. Estimate the size (2" X 1" X 1"), the volume (1/2 cup), the weight (2 ounces) and/or the number of items (12) of that type of food.

**What kind:**

In this column, write down the type of food you ate. Be as specific as you can. Include sauces and gravies. Don't forget to write down "extras," such as soda pop, salad dressing, mayonnaise, butter, sour cream, sugar and ketchup.

**Time:**

Write the time of day you ate the food.

**Where:**

Write what room or part of the house you were in when you ate. If you ate in a restaurant, fast-food chain or your car, write that location down.

**Alone or with someone:**

If you ate by yourself, write "alone." If you were with friends or family members, list them.

**Paired with:**

In this column, list any activities you were doing while you were eating (for example, working, watching TV, ironing).

**Mood:**

How were you feeling while you were eating (for example, sad, happy, depressed)?

**Helpful Hints:**

1. Don't change your eating habits, unless your family doctor has given you specific instructions to do so.
2. Tell the truth. There's nothing to be gained by trying to look good on these forms. Your family doctor can help only if you record what you really eat.
3. Record what you eat on all days your doctor recommends.
4. **Be sure to bring the completed forms back with you to your next doctor's**

appointment.

**Some basic rules to remember:**

**Write down everything:**

Keep your form with you all day, and write down everything you eat or drink. A piece of candy, a handful of pretzels, a can of soda pop or a small donut may not seem like much at the time, but over a week these calories add up!

**Do it now:**

Don't depend on your memory at the end of the day. Record your eating as you go.

**Be specific:**

If you ate a cheeseburger, write it down. Make sure you include "extras," such as gravy on your meat or cheese on your vegetables. Record french fries as french fries, not as potatoes.

**Estimate amounts:**

If you had a piece of cake, estimate the size (2" x 1" x 2"). If you had a vegetable, record how much you ate (1/4 cup or 2 cups?). When eating meat, remember that a 3-ounce cooked portion is about the size of a deck of cards.

If you have any questions, call your family doctor.

**Sample Food Diary**

Food or Drink						
How much	What Kind	Time	Where	Alone or with whom	Activity	Mood
3	chocolate chip cookies	3:25 p.m.	office	alone	working on report	bored
1	cheeseburger	6:15 p.m.	BurgerKing	Claire, Jackie	talking	happy
1	regular french fry					
1	vanilla shake					
1 cup	Haagen Dazs ice cream	10:00 p.m.	kitchen	alone	watching tv	tired


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This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

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