

30 Eating Habits of Healthy and Happy Families

1. Drink only water (or flavored seltzer water) with meals. If you drink hot or cold coffee or tea, try it black or at least without sweeteners.	2. Try eating only real foods (no packaged or processed foods) for snacks. Check out this list of easy, real food snacks .	3. Read the labels of everything packaged you eat. If there are 5+ ingredients, or strange ones you can't pronounce, consider a better choice. Aim for low sugar, too.	4. To save time in the mornings, make breakfast ahead of time for the week. Try baked bacon-and-egg cups or egg scrambles, pre-portioned ready to microwave for 30 sec.	5. Stay positive at meal time. Don't make negative comments about foods you don't like. Children are watching and learning from you.	6. Make your family this simple salad at dinner and skip the store-bought dressing.	7. New rule! Try offering dessert only on certain days of the week (for example, Fridays-Sundays). This cuts out sugar and whining for sweets on non-dessert days.
8. Don't force kids to eat, and don't provide alternatives. Try this at least at dinnertime-for both of you! If they won't eat, ask them, "Did you eat enough to make it to breakfast?"	9. Try a one pan, 30-minute, roasted chicken and vegetable meal for dinner. It all goes on one pan and couldn't be easier.	10. Fill your purse/briefcase, workout bag, and/or car with healthy options you can grab on the go. Single-serve olives, 1-ounce packs of nuts, dried fruit, etc.	11. Cut up vegetables to have handy for packing lunches or when kids are hungry pre-dinner. Store them in one big sectioned container in the fridge for easy access.	12. Use olive oil or coconut oil for most of your cooking and baking needs. Most other oils are highly processed. If you eat dairy, butter is better than margarine.	13. Try a small bowl of fresh fruit or a better-for-you microwavable apple cinnamon or chocolate mug cake if you want a treat on a dessert night. (These are gluten free, BTW.)	14. Switch your tomato sauce to a no-sugar option. Read the labels carefully to check ingredients or make your own simple no-sugar marinara. Try it on zoodles (can be bought pre-made).
15. Make your own easy, real food lunch. Leftovers are easiest. Or make a salad with leftover meat. Or try avocado chicken salad .	16. Organic or not? Choose organic dairy, fruits and vegetables when possible. Local meats and eggs can be as good as organic, even if not certified. Limit processed organic.	17. While chips are not health food, some chips are better than others. Choose some that have fewer than 5 ingredients (tortilla, sweet potato, popcorn).	18. Gluten-free processed foods are still processed foods. Some people feel better eating gluten-free. But whole foods are the best basis for a gluten-free diet.	19. Breakfast cereals are highly processed. Try this oatmeal 1-2-3 recipe for whole-grain rolled oats. It is easy and quick--only 3 minutes in the microwave.	20. Buy whole-fat plain yogurt and add your own fruit/honey. Yogurt is one "health food" that can be tricky. Most store-bought fruited yogurt contains a lot of sugar.	21. Use convenient, reusable, preferably colorful containers for your child's lunch, and even for your own. It's easy, fun, stylish and "green"!
22. Plan for leftovers at least once a week. Eat it the next day for lunch or dinner, or freeze it. It is the most efficient way to make real food consistently.	23. For an easy side, roast vegetables . It brings out their flavor. Most are ready in 30 minutes; you can grill and toss a salad in that time!	24. Whole foods (fruits, vegetables) are the best sources of carbohydrates. Surprisingly, data is lacking that whole grains are better for you. Consider limiting them.	25. Set the table and sit down to a meal together whenever you can. Use your best plates. Use your best manners. Stay until everyone's done and have the best time!	26. Plan to use a slow-cooker at least once a week. Avoid recipes with processed foods; choose ones with real, low sugar ingredients. Don't scoff at browning meat first, it improves taste and texture!	27. Surround yourself with like-minded, health-conscious people. Support groups work! We all need encouragement, accountability, and fresh ideas.	28. Serve fish at least once a week. It cooks in 15 minutes. Wild fish is better than farmed. Look for local seafood, or at least from the USA (e.g., wild Alaskan salmon). Tuna in a can counts, too!
29. Grilling is one the easiest ways to eat real food. A complete meal can be made at once and there's little clean up. Try rubs, marinades or dipping sauces for variety. Experiment with veggies, too!	30. Take some action! It may seem <i>everyone</i> is telling you <i>everything</i> is bad for you. Just make one change to eat according to nature and what makes you feel best—that's a great start! Still stuck? How about a goal to lower sugar?		 <p>THE WANDERING RD</p>			
				<p>Diane Norwood, MS, RD, CDE Go to www.thewanderingrd.com for more nutrition information and recipes for easy, real food.</p>		