

Feelin' Fine in 2009 – New Year's Nutrition Tips

Are you one of the many Americans that have vowed to “Eat right” and/or “Lose weight” in 2009? If so, you aren't alone – these are among the most common New Year's Resolutions. Cutting back on fatty, salty, unhealthy foods sounds remarkably easy on New Year's Day...especially after the marathon bingeing that many of us do between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. But what happens mid-January or later? That candy-filled vending machine won't stop calling your name! Your car automatically pulls into the drive-thru lane at Burger King! Read on for a few tips to help you ramp up your resolve and put a cramp in your cravings.

FOCUS ON THE HERE AND NOW:

Sure you want to turn heads in your bikini on the cruise this summer...but that's MONTHS away! Having a long term goal can make major diet boo-boo's seem minor – what's one candy bar when you have 5 months to trim down? Try breaking down your healthy eating resolution into a fixed amount of time – something you're sure you can manage...even if it's just a few days. Examples: “No regular soda until the weekend”, “3 cups of veggies per day, for the next three days”, “Eat breakfast both days this weekend”. Being successful in your short term goals can give you the confidence you need to carry on. Once you make it to your goal date, reward yourself with a non-food prize, and start over.

In addition, focus on the immediate rewards of your healthier diet...it may be a while before you're ready to expose your whiter than white mid-section to the world, but did you notice other, more immediate, improvements as a result of your recent changes? Less heartburn? Better sleep? More energy? Consider keeping a journal to document ALL the positive benefits of the changes you've made. Keeping track of how your diet is improving the quality of your life can really keep you motivated!

FOCUS ON THE “CAN HAVES” INSTEAD OF THE “CANNOT HAVES”

Don't waste time and energy pining over missed Snickers and fast food fries (2 of my personal weaknesses). Think about the variety of flavors and textures in many healthy foods – and have fun experimenting! Try adding strawberries, candied pecans, diced chicken breast, mandarin oranges and dried cranberries to a bag of baby spinach leaves. Realize the full flavor of heart healthy olive oil – add it to the blender w/a can of rinsed garbanzo beans, garlic, and jarred roasted peppers – quick, easy, and nutritious hummus! Enjoy it with whole wheat naan bread or whole wheat pita chips.

Don't forget to improve the nutritional content of your current favorites. Make your breakfast burrito more bountiful by adding chopped bell peppers and onions to your eggs and topping it w/extra salsa. When you heat up a can of soup – add more fiber, vitamins, and minerals by tossing in a few frozen veggies at the same time. Will you be boiling some pre-made/pre-packaged

tortellini for a quick, easy dinner? Add some chopped spinach (bought frozen and thawed in microwave) and cherry tomatoes for more nutritional punch.

Eat nuts! Eat beans! Eat whole grains! Eat “loin” and “round” cuts of meat! Eat low fat dairy foods! Eat berries! Eat fruits and veggies...and eat lots of them! If you eat enough of the good stuff...you won't miss the not-so-good stuff!

EAT BREAKFAST

Research continues to prove that your mother was right – breakfast IS the most important meal of the day...especially when it comes to weight control and cravings. Breakfast helps “wake up” a sluggish metabolism in the morning. It also brings your blood sugar back to normal, preventing you from desperately seeking simple carbs in the office break room, vending machine, or corner Starbucks mid-morning. And think about it, all you breakfast skippers out there...many of us don't meet ALL of our nutrient needs eating THREE meals a day...how could you expect to do it in just two? So, what to eat in the am? Try a cup of whole grain cereal, skim milk, and a small banana. Peanut butter on graham crackers washed down with some milk followed by some strawberries is great too. A poached egg w/a slice of Canadian bacon and some reduced fat cheese between 2 toasted whole grain English muffins will surely get you going in the morning. Layer low fat yogurt with berries and kiwi, and sprinkle the top with low fat granola – mmmm, good! Leftovers from the night before or a quick glass of Carnation Instant Breakfast will work for those of you claiming to “not have the time” to make breakfast.

LET YOUR PANTRY BE YOUR PARTNER

How many times have you driven to the store in the middle of the night to satisfy a craving? Probably not as many times as you've raided your pantry or fridge. Make sure your pantry is on your side – don't let it taunt and tempt you with things that aren't part of your 2009 resolutions. Get rid of all the temptations and fill your pantry and fridge with stuff your body needs, like lean protein (nuts, canned tuna, salmon, chicken), dairy (low fat yogurt, cheese sticks) whole grains (cereal, wasa crisp bread, Triscuits, kashi granola bars, etc) and plenty of fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried). You'll be far less likely to give in to a craving, when the object of your desire is not close at hand. If it's a really uncontrollable craving, make a trip out to get a single serving of that which hits the spot. Example: Can't go another minute without your ice cream? Make a special trip to McDonald's to enjoy a 150 calorie soft serve cone instead of buying a tub of ice cream for your home freezer...You won't feel deprived...and that ice cream won't be calling your name from the freezer come nightfall!

DON'T LET YOUR MIND GET AWAY WITH MURDER

Are you searching in between our couch pillows for a single sweet morsel even though you just ate an hour ago? Your very own mind just may be messing with your head. Give yourself a quick mental test – imagine sitting

down to a large sizzling steak, or perhaps a chef-prepared tasty salad. If this sounds good and appetizing, chances are you ARE indeed hungry and should get something to eat. If it doesn't sound so good, your mind may be playing tricks on you...making you crave sweets when you don't need to eat. Changing your environment can help squelch this type of craving – go to a different room, take a stretch break, call a friend, check your personal e-mail, turn your attention to a different task.

Hopefully these tips will help you to keep your cravings at bay, now and for the rest of the year. Happy 2009!