



The surprising benefits of food journaling

Learn how just a pen and paper can help improve your health

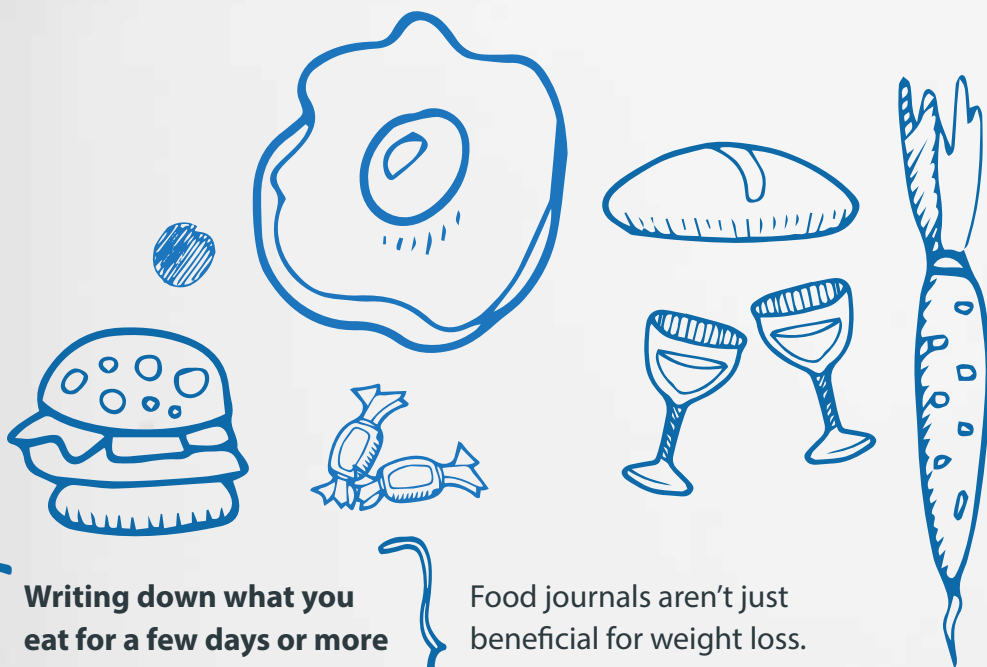
How to get started

Food journaling can be as easy as jotting bullet points on a Post-it note, or as immersive as keeping a full dietary diary. Here are some helpful tips:

- ④ Track your food using pen and paper, notes on your phone, a spreadsheet or a tracking app.
- ④ Record everything you eat throughout the day.
- ④ Record accurate quantities – this is for you, so don't fib on portions!
- ④ Don't forget drinks! Include how much water and other liquids you drink.
- ④ Note the time of the meal or snack.
- ④ Set a standard time to journal – do it all in the evening or make your notes immediately after mealtimes. Just be consistent every day.
- ④ Take your journal with you if you eat out.
- ④ Make notes on how you felt after different meals.



GET A SAMPLE DIARY CHART



Writing down what you eat for a few days or more can reveal patterns and opportunities you might not be aware of.

And that knowledge could help put you on the path to better health. By recording what you eat throughout the day, you have a visual reference of what goes in your mouth. If you can see that you eat ice cream every night while watching TV, you are much more likely to be conscious about your cravings.

Food journals aren't just beneficial for weight loss. They can help you diagnose a food allergy, ensure vegetarians get enough protein, aid diabetics in tracking their sugar, or even help you gain weight healthfully. You can – and should – also record your protein, sugar, water and alcohol intake. You might be surprised to see what you actually consume when you put it all on one page.



The surprising benefits
of food journals *continued*

Play detective!



For most people, writing in a diary isn't enough. Take some time to review your notes and look for patterns and clues. It's important to look at eating habits during times of stress, sadness, happiness, etc.

You might also want to track other habits like exercise and sleep. It's often easier to see where problems or opportunities lie if you're looking at the big picture.

Start by asking questions about your diary:

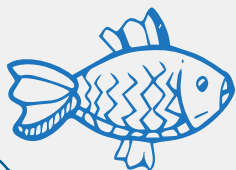
- Is there a meal that you're eating too much of, or too little of?
- Are you skipping meals and making up for it later?
- Did that meal make you full, or were you left still hungry?
- What were you doing when you felt too full? (Tip – people often overeat when watching TV.)
- Did you use food as a pick-me-up when you were stressed, sad or bored?
- Are your serving sizes appropriate?
- Are you experiencing any symptoms after eating certain types of food (stomach problems, headaches, brain fog, pain, etc.)?

Make changes

Once you discover a habit or a trigger in your diet, start working toward healthy changes. If you eat ice cream every night before bed, try scaling down to a couple nights a week. Keep your changes manageable, and take things one step at a time. Don't try to overhaul your entire lifestyle in one night.

There is no right or wrong way to journal. Do what works best for you. The only rule is to be honest! This exercise isn't supposed to make you feel guilty about your food choices. It should help you feel empowered to see exactly what you consume.

HOW MUCH IS ONE SERVING?*



MEAT/FISH – deck of cards

BREAD – CD case

VEGGIES – tennis ball

CHEESE – four dice

FRUIT – light bulb

**COOKED RICE, PASTA,
OR POTATO** –

1/2 tennis ball



*NIH.gov

CLICK THE LINK TO TAKE A SHORT QUIZ FOR PROOF OF COMPLETION:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2PJK2VB>