Quick Tips for Adding Healthy, Whole Foods

When making dietary changes, it should not feel restrictive, overwhelming or hard to live with. You are making long-term lifestyle changes, so you want to have a plan to make the habits stick around.

Transitioning to a healthier way of eating may seem daunting, so here are some tips to keep in mind:

**Eat vegetables at most meals.** Think salads, soups, side dishes or even adding veggies to your sandwich or wrap.

Fill the pantry with **healthy food choices** that are ready to eat and go. Snacks like nuts, seeds, Kind bars (with 5 grams of sugar or less) or fruit are good for “grab and go.”

**Don’t become number obsessed.** Use the general eyeballing guide to eat healthy without the added technical jargon and hours spent calculating calories.

**Learn to read labels** and don’t eat too many foods that are ultra-processed or high in sugar or saturated fats. If you don’t recognize most of the ingredients, it’s usually a good idea to pass.

**Never leave the station (or house on days off) without food** if you’ll be gone for more than two hours. You never know how long a call will be, so keeping some healthy snacks on the rig can help you avoid unhealthy choices. Make up some of your own trail mix (avoid ready-made trail mix as most of them have hydrogenated oils and other undesirable, processed ingredients) or bring a small cooler.

**Treat yourself in moderation.** Treats and “cheat meals” can help you maintain your sanity. Just don’t forget the goals you’ve set. One way of thinking is the 80/20 rule (or 90/10 depending on your goals). In order to be healthy and balanced, you don’t always have to make 100% healthy food choices. The remaining 20% can be less healthy food that you consider a treat.

**Learn to cook and prepare foods.** Invite everyone at the station to participate in the meal planning and prep to make it fun and inclusive.

**Most importantly, don’t be too rigid,** and remember that making small changes over time will make a huge difference, and it makes the changes easier to stick to.

More resources on nutrition can be found at [www.iaff.org/nutrition](http://www.iaff.org/nutrition)