

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF Lifestyle Medicine

Tips for Eating with Friends or Family

It is natural to copy the eating habits of those around us. Whether you are hosting a party or eating at a restaurant, you can make healthy choices easy while still focusing on having fun with your friends.

1 Hosting at Home

When you have friends or family over, the way you set up your food matters. You can encourage people to eat more vegetables without even mentioning it.

- **The Buffet Line:** If guests are serving themselves, put the colorful salads and vegetables at the very beginning of the table. Most people fill most of their plate with the first things they see.
- **The Right Tools:** Use big, easy-to-use tongs for salads. This makes it easier for people to grab big helpings of greens and smaller portions of everything else.
- **Fancy Water:** Place a pitcher of water with sliced cucumbers, mint, or lemons right in the center of the table. If the water looks tasty and is easy to reach, people will drink it!

2 Tips for Eating Out

Restaurants offer large portions of food that are often high in fat, salt and sugar. You can stay in control by making a plan before the server arrives.

- **Order First:** Try to be the first person at the table to order. We often feel pressured to order what our friends are getting. If you order a healthy meal first, you won't be tempted to change your mind when you hear what others pick.
- **Side-Dish Trick:** If the main meals on the menu don't have many vegetables, order a side of broccoli or a salad as your appetizer. Filling up on fiber early helps you enjoy your main meal without feeling overly stuffed.

3 Focus on the Fun, Not Just the Food

At parties, we often snack just because we are standing near the food. Creating a little distance helps you eat only when you are actually hungry.

- **Once your plate is full, move to a different room** or a seating area away from the snack bowls. This keeps you from reaching for chips just because they are in front of you.
- **Try to fill 80% of your plate with healthy foods.** Use the last 20% for your favorite treats. This lets you enjoy the party food you love without overdoing it.

DO THIS NOW (5-MINUTE RESET)

- ☐ If you are hosting, move the salad to the front of the food line.
- ☐ Put your biggest serving spoons in the vegetable bowls.
- ☐ Slice a lemon or cucumber into your water pitcher to make it look more inviting.
- ☐ Decide now that you will be the first person to order at your next dinner out.



The Bottom Line:

Social eating is about the people, not just the food. When you set up your environment to make healthy choices easy, you can spend more energy on what really matters: your company.

nudge to nourish

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