

# Journaling

Monitoring or keeping track of your daily dietary intake is an important part of establishing healthier eating habits. Putting everything down on paper pushes awareness to a level that we don't have otherwise.

Documenting intake helps you to think twice about selecting healthy choices and appropriate sizes. It also facilitates identifying situations, stresses and times of the day that increase likelihood for overeating. Keeping a journal prevents mindless eating.

*Writing down your food and activity too much trouble? These will help:*

**Tip 1: Find a tracking system that works for you.**

Some people like to write things down on paper, others prefer to use the computer. I like the *Ultimate Diet Log* by Suzanne Schlosberg and Cynthia Sass.

**When writing:**

- Make accurate entries.
- Be specific.
- Record data ongoing

**Tip 2: Focus on behaviors you are trying to change.**

Be most specific and detailed in the areas where you struggle most. If nighttime eating is your biggest challenge, record how you feel emotionally and where you eat/drink during the evenings in addition to what and how much of each item.

**Tip 3: Make time for logging.**

Don't wait until the end of the day to record everything. Remembering can be difficult when it happened several hours before.

Even if you only have half a minute, jot down your foods and activity immediately afterward. At night, you can re-write or type these things into your log and add any important details such as calories, minutes, or feelings.

## Recording Your Entries

### 1. Day and time

### 2. Type of meal

B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner, or S=snack

### 3. Portion sizes

The following can help you estimate:

- ½ teaspoon=a finger tip
- 1 teaspoon=a thumb tip
- 2 tablespoons=1 golf ball
- 1 small fruit=a computer mouse
- 1 medium fruit=baseball
- 1½ ounce cheese=6 dice
- 1-2 ounces snack food=small handful
- 3 ounces=deck of cards or palm of hand
- 1 pancake or waffle=a 4" CD
- 4 small cookies=casino chips
- ½ cup fruit, vegetable, or cooked cereal, pasta, or rice=1 small fist
- 1 tortilla= a small 7" plate
- 1 muffin=1 large egg

### 4. Write down every item you eat or drink.

### 5. Where were you - the specific location?

### 6. Who were you with?

### 7. Why did you eat?

- H=hungry
- A=angry
- L=lonely
- B=bored
- V=viewed or smelled it

If none of these options apply, write the reason.

### 8. Include physical activities

- If you were doing another activity while you were eating, write it down.
- Include any physical activity during the day and the time engaged.

When you keep detailed records, you gain insights on areas where you lack control and how to improve. Going over your entries with a trained professional on a weekly basis increases accountability and also your counselor will see things you miss.

*The more you choose to keep track, the greater your chances for success.*

According to the National Weight Loss Registry, people who keep food records are the most successful with sustaining weight loss. Why? Each day you can easily see the choices you make and identify what gets you off track.

It can also be helpful to record your personal thoughts, successes and obstacles. It's good to occasionally reflect on how far you've come and what you're going to achieve. Writing about the struggles you go through aids in maintaining focus and persevering.