Drinks, Desserts, Snacks, Eating Out, and Salt

Session 3

Background Information
Tips
Goals
Why Should I Limit Sugar-Sweetened Drinks, Like Regular Soda, Sports and Energy Drinks, and Sweet Tea?

Sugar-sweetened drinks contain a lot of sugar to make them taste good. It is the high sugar content that makes these drinks unhealthy.

- Sugars add lots of extra calories, but no nutrition (vitamins, minerals, fiber, etc.). An average 12-ounce soda has 140 calories (about nine teaspoons of sugar). This means a 36-ounce soda has up to 420 calories—almost 20% of the calories an adult, who is not very active, needs for the entire day!
- Sugar-sweetened drinks don't make you feel full, leaving you hungry and wanting more food.
- Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks each day can increase your risk of becoming overweight or developing diabetes.

How Do I Know if My Drink Has Added Sugar?

To limit sugar-sweetened drinks, you have to know how to spot one. One way to do this is by checking the drink label for common sugars. You might also look out for certain types of drinks.

Sugars to watch out for on drink labels go by the following names:

- High fructose corn syrup, corn sugar, or corn sweetener.
- Malt syrup or sucrose syrup.
- Sugar, invert sugar, cane sugar.
- Fructose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, lactose, sucrose.
- Honey or molasses.

Common Types of Sugar-Sweetened Drinks Are:

- Non-diet sodas (soft drinks)
- Fruit punch and lemonade
- Sports and energy drinks
- Sweet tea
- Kool-Aid™
- Sweetened coffee drinks
If I Limit Sugar-Sweetened Drinks, What Can I Drink Instead?

When people hear they should limit sugar-sweetened drinks, they often ask, “What can I drink instead?” In fact, there are many other options for drinks that don’t have a lot of added sugar.

Here are some drinks that are better for your health:
- Plain water, with a twist of lemon or lime for a fresh taste.
- Carbonated water (Seltzer water) mixed with a splash of 100% fruit juice.
- A small amount of 100% fruit juice (half a cup), but no more than twice a day.
- Milk.
- Unsweetened or lightly sweetened iced tea, hot or herbal tea, or coffee. If you need to sweeten your tea or coffee, one to two teaspoons of sugar per cup or glass is okay (so is a little cream, for instance, one to two tablespoons of half-and-half). This is much better than the nine teaspoons of sugar in a 12-ounce soda.

What Else Should I Know About Choosing Drinks?

There are a few more things to know about choosing drinks:
- If you drink diet soda, be careful not to drink too much. Diet sodas have no nutritional value and may lead to bone loss.
- Small amounts of alcohol are okay; as many studies suggest a small amount of alcohol may reduce the risk of heart disease. A small amount of alcohol is one drink per day for a woman or up to two drinks per day for a man. A drink is usually considered four ounces of wine, twelve ounces of beer, or one ounce of liquor. But, alcohol is not recommended as a way to avoid heart disease because of its other effects. For instance, even small amounts of alcohol in women may increase a woman’s chance of getting breast cancer. Additionally, drinking large amounts of alcohol can have many other harmful effects.

Now that you’ve learned about how to choose healthier drinks, it is time to learn some more about desserts, sweets, and snacks.
Desserts, Sweets, and Snacks

As you have been learning, making healthy food choices doesn't mean that you can't enjoy what you eat. There are many foods that are naturally sweet or enjoyable and are still good for you.

On the next few pages, you will learn about how to make good choices about:

- Desserts and sweets
- Snacks

How Can I Enjoy Desserts and Sweets and Still Eat Healthy?

You can eat desserts and sweets and still have a healthy diet. But, you have to think carefully about what you choose to eat and how much you eat. It is a good idea to fill up on healthy foods, so that you are not as hungry for desserts and sweets.

Here are some tips for enjoying desserts and sweets:

- Save sweets for special occasions (birthdays and holidays) and a couple of times per week.
- Try eating fruit as a naturally sweet and healthy dessert.
- Chocolate may reduce the risk of heart disease and dark chocolate may be better for your heart than regular chocolate. Small amounts of dark chocolate (more than 50% cocoa solids), such as half to one ounce, is a good choice for dessert.
- In general, stay away from store-bought doughnuts, sweet rolls, pies, cakes, cookies, caramel candies, and cream-filled desserts. These foods often contain unhealthy trans fats. They also have a lot of sugar. If you purchase these items, look for those that are trans fat free.
- Try making your own desserts (see pages 76-91 in the Cookbook).

How Can I Enjoy Snacks and Still Eat Healthy?

There is nothing wrong with eating snacks between meals. As you’ve heard before, fruits, vegetables, and nuts are good snack choices. But, many people crave other snacks such as snack chips and crackers.

It is okay to eat snack chips and crackers now and then. Also, healthier options for snack chips and crackers can be found in most stores. What makes them healthier is that they are made with healthy oils.

Here are some tips for healthier snack and chip choices:

- Choose snack chips and crackers that are trans fat free and made with healthy vegetable oils.
- Consider the lightly salted options.
- Pay attention to portion size as it is easy to overdo it on the chips. Take a small serving out of the bag and then close the bag and put it away.
Eating Out

When eating away from home it is often hard to know how to make healthy choices. Knowing what to eat at restaurants can be especially hard. In this section, we review ways to eat out and still be good to your heart.

What Are Some Healthier Choices I Can Make When Eating Out?

Fast food can be convenient and taste good, and doesn’t cost a lot, but many food options at fast food restaurants are not healthy. Some fast food restaurants still use unhealthy trans fats for frying and most meals are high in salt or sugar.

If you eat at fast food restaurants, remember:

- Stay away from the large or “supersized” sugar-sweetened beverages. Consider other drink options as reviewed earlier in this section.
- Select healthy sides like fruit cups or side salad.
- Order whole wheat bread or buns if available.
- Ask for the Nutrition Facts sheet to help make the best choices.

When You Eat at Sit-Down Restaurants:

- Ask for a “doggie” bag or box when you first get your meal, so you will not be tempted to “clean your plate” when you are full.
- Avoid all-you-can-eat buffets or have a plan before you go in about what you will eat.
**What Are Some Other Strategies for Eating Out?**

When eating out, there may not be as many healthy options as you’d like. Thus, it’s important to have a plan for picking the most healthful foods. Such plans are especially important if eating fast food.

Plans for eating out include picking healthier foods among several categories. To learn more, turn to the page indicated.

- Breakfast (page C-73)
- Salads (page C-73)
- Fried foods (page C-73)
- Burgers and sandwiches (page C-73)
- Chicken and fish (page C-73)
- Pizza (page C-73)
- Food bars (page C-74)
- Desserts (page C-74)

**What About Sodium (Salt)?**

Salt, also called sodium, is used to make the foods we eat taste good. However, too much salt can cause high blood pressure, which is bad for your heart.

To keep your heart healthy and your blood pressure normal, it is important to pay attention to how much salt you are eating. Most experts suggest you don’t eat more than one level teaspoon of salt (the same as 2300 milligrams of sodium) in one day. This applies to sea salt too.

To lower the amount of salt you are eating:

- Pay attention to how much salt you are getting in both processed foods and the foods you cook. Keep in mind that most of the salt in your diet comes from processed and restaurant foods rather than from the salt shaker.
- Try to eat foods with less than 300 milligrams of sodium in a serving. Anything over 400 milligrams of sodium is considered high in salt.
- Look for foods that say “no salt added,” “low sodium,” or “reduced sodium” and then check the label for sodium content. It is important to remember that many processed foods list salt per serving. If you eat more than one serving, you are getting more salt than what is listed on the label.
- If you eat canned vegetables, rinse the vegetables in water before eating them.
Which Types of Foods Are Usually High in Salt?

In addition to checking for salt content on food labels, you can learn the foods that are usually high in salt.

Watch out for the following high-salt foods:
- Boxed and frozen dinners (like macaroni & cheese or Hamburger Helper®)
- Canned soups and vegetables
- Frozen vegetables with sauces
- Cheese sauces
- Bacon, ham, sausage, hot dogs
- Fast foods

How Can I Lower Salt in My Diet?

In addition to checking food labels and avoiding high-salt foods, there are some other things you can do to lower salt in your diet:
- Only add a very small amount of salt at the table.
- If a recipe calls for salt, add less than half the amount.
- Try other ways to season your food.
- If you buy frozen dinners, buy low-salt or low sodium meals or have regular frozen dinners no more than once a week. Better still, make your own frozen dinners—cook larger amounts of food and freeze the extra in containers to reheat later. This is also a good way to save money.
What Can I Use Instead of Salt to Season My Food?

Lowering salt doesn’t have to mean poor taste. Many herbs and spices can be as flavorful as salt.

To bring out the flavor in your foods without adding salt, try the following herbs and spices.

- For beef: Use sage, garlic, thyme, pepper, or turmeric.
- For chicken: Use paprika, rosemary, curry, or garlic or onion powder.
- For pork: Use thyme, basil, sage, pepper, curry, or garlic or onion powder.
- For fish: Use lemon or lime juice, dill, or garlic or onion powder.
- Try Mrs. Dash® or make your own herb and spice mixture. Keep it in a shaker and use when cooking or at the table.

However, when choosing herbs, spices, and other seasonings, be careful. Many seasonings have lots of salt such as garlic and onion salts (choose garlic or onion “powder” instead), poultry seasoning, soy sauce, barbecue sauce, ketchup, some hot sauces, and spaghetti and tomato sauces.

Summary

Here is a summary of key points from Drinks, Desserts, Snacks, Eating Out, and Salt.

- Try to limit the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages you drink, because they add calories and no nutrition. If you drink two or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day, reducing the amount you drink to one or less per day is one of the most important changes you can make to improve your health.
- Go easy on desserts and sweets, and try fruit instead. Choose healthier snack food options.
- Make smart choices when eating out at restaurants, and try to eat out less often.
- Be careful about the amount of salt that is in processed and restaurant foods.
Drinks, Desserts, Snacks, Eating Out, and Salt

Tips

Check the goals you want to work on for the next contact.

1. **Choose healthy drinks.**
   - Aim to replace sugar-sweetened drinks with healthy drinks like water, lightly sweetened tea or coffee, milk, or 100% fruit juice.
   - Stay away from non-diet sodas, bottled fruit drinks (such as fruit punch or fruit-aides), sports drinks, energy drinks, and other sugary beverages—they are full of sugar, which means they provide a lot of calories but are not filling.
   - Avoid drinks that list sugar as one of the first ingredients. There are many different types of sugar. Try to avoid sweeteners like high fructose corn syrup (and other syrups), sucrose, malt, fructose, or honey.
   - Good choices are unsweetened or lightly sweetened iced tea, hot tea, or coffee. If you need to sweeten your tea or coffee, one to two teaspoons per cup or glass is okay (so is a little cream, like one to two tablespoons of half-and-half). This amount of sugar is much better than the nine teaspoons in a 12-ounce soda.
   - Other good choices are:
     - Seltzer water with a touch of lemon, lime, or fruit juice.
     - 100% fruit juice, but aim for one cup or less per day.
     - Milk.
     - Diet soda.

2. **Watch out for sweets. Choose other foods for snacks or desserts.**
   - Fill up on healthy foods so you are not as hungry for sweets.
   - Try fruit for dessert.
   - Save sweets for special occasions (birthdays and holidays), not every day.
   - When you do eat sweets, eat small amounts.
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- Stay away from store-bought doughnuts, sweet rolls, pies, cakes, cookies, candy bars (except dark chocolate), milk chocolate, caramel candies, and cream-filled desserts. They are often high in sugar and may have trans fats.
- A small amount of dark chocolate (more than 50% cocoa solids) is a good choice for dessert. Dark chocolate in small amounts (half to one ounce per serving) is thought to be good for your heart.

3. Choose cold and frozen desserts with care. Aim to eat two or fewer servings of frozen dessert each week.
- For a refreshing summer dessert, have a chilled slice of watermelon or a bowl of fresh berries with vanilla yogurt.
- Try popsicles as a tasty treat. Be sure store-bought popsicles are made with 100% fruit juice, or make your own. Freeze 100% fruit juice in small cups with popsicle sticks.
- If you want a frozen dessert, eat a small amount (about half a cup) of ice cream, ice milk, fruit ice, sherbet, or frozen yogurt.

4. Be careful with snack chips and crackers.
- Choose lightly salted chips and crackers made with vegetable oil.
- Check the ingredients list of snack chip packages and avoid items that contain partially hydrogenated vegetable oil or trans fat on the food label.
- Try chips or crackers made with vegetable oil.
- When possible, choose whole grain crackers with no trans fats.
- Instead of snack chips or crackers, try raw vegetables, fruit, or a small handful of nuts. These are healthier options.
5. Make good choices when you eat at restaurants.

- When you eat out, choose what you eat carefully.
- Choose healthy menu items such as:
  - Grilled or baked red meat, poultry or fish or fried poultry or fish if you know that non-trans fat oil is used.
  - Tossed vegetable salads with one to two tablespoons of dressing.
  - Steamed or sautéed vegetables.
  - Fruit plates.
  - Whole grain breads.
  - Beans.
  - Water with a twist of lemon.
- Fried foods are okay if fried in vegetable oil without trans fats.
- Preparing food at home is a good option because you know what ingredients are used. This is especially true for fried foods because sometimes it is not easy to find out if restaurants use healthy oils.
- Avoid drinks with lots of sugar. In restaurants that have unsweetened and sweetened tea, ask for a mixture (half unsweetened and half sweetened).
- As portions sizes are often large, split an order with a friend, or eat half of the portion and take the rest home for another meal.
- Order small portion sizes.

6. Go the low-salt way. Try to buy low sodium or no added salt foods all or most of the time.

- Most of the salt that people eat comes from restaurant or packaged foods.
- Buy foods that say low- or reduced salt (sodium) or no salt added.
- Eat out less often in restaurants—even healthy restaurant meals often have a lot of salt.
- Use seasonings like pepper, lemon juice, vinegar, herbs, and spices. See pages C-77 and C-78 for suggestions on adding flavor to your food without adding salt. Mix your favorite herbs or spices in a handy shaker.
- Watch out for packaged or frozen meals with noodles. These can be high in salt and trans fats. See pages C-81 and C-82 for tips on reading food labels.
My Goals and First Steps

To make changes, it is important to make goals and keep track of your progress. On the other side of this sheet, write down the two goals you selected to work on today. Then write down your “First Steps” for achieving these goals. First Steps should be specific and realistic to get you started.

To plan First Steps, think about:

- When you will start working towards this goal.
- What you need to get started.
- If you can actually reach the goal.

Also, the other side of this sheet has two tables to help you keep track of your progress.
Drinks, Desserts, Snacks, Eating Out, and Salt

My Goals and First Steps

Date: ______________________

Goal 1: ______________________

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First Steps: ______________________

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Goal 2: ______________________

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First Steps: ______________________

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Place this sheet where you will see it often (refrigerator or bathroom mirror). You may monitor goals by the week (left side of table) or by the day (right side of table).

**GOAL 1: Did you meet your goal? (Circle ☑ for Yes, or ☐ for No)**

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**GOAL 2: Did you meet your goal? (Circle ☑ for Yes, or ☐ for No)**

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