

Improve diet quality to boost weight loss

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(HealthDay)—Eating fewer calories is essential when you want to lose weight, but there's growing evidence that the quality of those calories matters, too. Eating high-quality foods not only boosts weight loss, but also reduces your risk for chronic diseases.

High-quality foods are fresh or minimally processed. Think vegetables and fruits, whole grains, plant-based fats and healthy sources of protein. Fresh or flash frozen choices are best. If you need to buy canned foods, look for no-sugar, no-salt added varieties.

Lower-quality foods typically contain refined grains like white flour and various sugars. They're usually processed and packaged, and high in saturated and/or trans fats—even though manufacturers are supposed to eliminate [trans fats](#), the deadlines to do so have been extended.

One study showed just how strong the association is between low-quality foods and gaining weight. When people ate more foods like potato chips, sugar-sweetened beverages, and red and

processed meats—and fewer vegetables, whole grains, fruits, nuts and yogurt—they put on nearly one pound a year. Unchecked, over time, those pounds can start adding up ... to obesity.

Another study found that increasing the quality of fruit, meat, [grains](#) and dairy boosted [weight loss](#) after just 12 weeks.

To make the switchover easier on yourself, set an attainable goal of eating one new or different high-quality food at least once every week.

Yes, high quality can at times be more expensive, especially for [fresh produce](#). But if you buy in season, whether at farmers' markets or your local grocery store, you can usually get better quality fresh foods at lower prices.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has suggestions for [making better food choices](#).

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