



Real Fuel: Using Food to Improve Well-Being

Adding **5** mph to Your Nutritional Engine Performance

Your body is an amazing, finely tuned machine. And just like a car, it runs best when you fill it with the right kind of fuel. Your food choices can do many great things for you:

- Improve your mood
- Increase your energy level
- Build up your immune system
- Help you focus
- Affect your sleep patterns
- Reduce the severity of diseases

However, the idea of making nutrition changes can be daunting. That's because the first thought many people have is, "I have to fix everything!" That's an overwhelming and almost impossible goal.

Our advice? Don't try to do it all at once. In car terms, don't worry about how quickly you can go from zero to 60mph. Instead, think about small, incremental changes to help answer this question:

"How can I add 5mph to my nutritional engine performance?"

You are in the driver's seat when it comes to your personal nutrition choices.

● **Do you like to adopt other people's successful ideas?** We've included tips and tricks suggested by people from across Ottawa County.

● **Want to come up with your own ideas?** That's great, too. Assess what you eat, and notice how it makes you feel. Then make some tweaks and re-evaluate. We've included some resources that might inspire you.

Any positive changes you make to your nutrition choices will help you feel — and be — healthier.

Great Things to Remember

- It doesn't have to be "organic" to be good for you.
- You don't have to cook everything...but make some things.
- Eating "zero" of anything is not sustainable.
- The smartest choices are foods without labels.
- "Food is medicine."
(This from Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine.)
- No food in nature combines fat, sugar and salt.
There's a reason!
- Blog posts are not (usually) science.

Some Ideas from Your Neighbors*

Convenience/Time-Saving Tips

- Buy pre-chopped salads or vegetables or cut them as soon as you buy them.
- Make a double batch of dinner so you can eat leftovers or freeze them.
- Use a crockpot so food cooks without supervision.
- Do weekly meal prep for at least some meals, and grocery shop once.
- Make sure the dishwasher has room before you start cooking, and put dishes in as you go.
- Make smoothies for breakfast: they're quick, nutritious and easy.
- Make homemade soups and freeze individual portions for quick, nutritious meals.
- Make one day each week 'clean out the fridge' day...each person eats his/her favorite leftovers.
- Add vegetables to pre-made meals to make them more nutritious.
- Cook extra of an ingredient (ex: chicken) so you can use it in more than one recipe.

Self-Control

- Don't buy it! You can't eat what you don't have in the house.
- Pack a lunch instead of going out.
- Prepackage snack foods for portion control.
- Limit eating out to a certain number of times per week.
- Use fruit as a snack – either room temperature, cold or frozen, as you prefer.
- Eat more slowly so you have a chance to feel full.
- Substitute water for soda; add cucumber, lemon or other things for flavor.
- Eat smaller portions of carbs with larger portions of vegetables.
- Drink water or tea throughout the day to keep from snacking.
- Stop adding sugar to coffee.

Inspiration

- Look for new recipes that will break up the weekly meal routine.
- Sign up for a "recipe per day" email.
- Substitute ingredients in recipes you already like.
(ex: use turkey sausage instead of pork sausage, or high fiber pasta instead of regular pasta).
- Cook together as a family (ex: spouse with spouse, parent with kids).
- Add something to a recipe that you or your kids enjoy (like fruit in pancakes).
- Allow kids to pick new foods to try while grocery shopping.

* Ideas identified through responses to a December 2020 community survey.



Resources

Here are just a few of the many resources available to you through the North Ottawa Wellness Foundation partners and connected organizations.

- realfoodcan.org: recipes, ideas, techniques and more.
- nochgetbetter.com: sign up for newsletter, learn about classes and public seminars.
- tcfymca.org: nutrition consultation and training classes.
- northottawawellnessfoundation.org: articles, links and more.

