



# Real Fuel: Using Food to Improve Well-Being

## What Are Your Orange Construction Barrels?

We all cringe when we see orange construction barrels along the road. They usually mean we can't go where we want to go.

The road to nutritional wellness has many metaphorical "orange construction barrels." They're the barriers that keep us from making the best choices for overall health. Yet all of these barriers can be overcome with two basic steps.

01

### Acknowledge

Sometimes we aren't aware of the habits we've adopted around nutrition. And sometimes we just don't want to own them. It's easier to deny them, or try a fad diet and then blame it when we fail. **The first step to change is to acknowledge your habits.**

02

### Respond

Once you understand your own behaviors, you can take steps to overcome them. Remember that you don't have to change everything at once! But you'll stay "stuck in traffic" unless you do something different.



**Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, you do better.**

• MAYA ANGELOU •

# Some Ideas from Your Neighbors\*

Barriers are real but they are not insurmountable. Here are some strategies that folks in Ottawa County use to address the top three barriers to nutritious eating.

## **Time: we're too busy too cook**

- Share meals with friends...like a meal car-pool!
- Make a large batch of a recipe so you can eat it again or freeze some.
- Make "dump in and press start" crockpot recipes.
- Make stir-fry: it's quick, easy and flexible.
- Share the planning and cooking responsibilities among family members.
- Pre-make some meals on the weekend so they are ready for busy weeknights.
- Meal plan each week for at least some meals, and grocery shop once.
- Choose recipes with few ingredients.
- Buy "ready to eat" fruits, salads and vegetables; pre-cut the veggies you buy.
- Make homemade soups and freeze individual portions for quick, nutritious meals later.
- 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.

## **Habit: we've done it this way for a long time and it's hard to change.**

- Switch from frying something to steaming, grilling, roasting or baking it.
- Try a farm share, which forces you to eat different things as seasons change.
- Follow a food blog that sends new recipes regularly.
- Make small changes over time; don't change everything at once.
- Start a file of recipes you want to try; pull one out when you need inspiration.

## **Willingness: my family has very picky eaters.**

- Try changing the temperature of the food. (ex: freeze grapes)
- Search online for a new recipe using a healthy ingredient your family likes.
- Substitute healthier versions of an ingredient. (ex: low salt beans or high-fiber pasta)
- Keep at it, and make the same meal for everyone! You'll find things they like.
- Use the "no thank you bite" strategy every time.
- Don't assume they won't like it!
- Make side dishes you know they like when you introduce something new.
- Have family members pick new recipes to try in a cookbook or online.

\* 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](http://realfoodcan.org): recipes, ideas, techniques and more.
- [nochgetbetter.com](http://nochgetbetter.com): sign up for newsletter, learn about classes and public seminars.
- [tcfymca.org](http://tcfymca.org): nutrition consultation and training classes.
- [northottawawellnessfoundation.org](http://northottawawellnessfoundation.org): articles, links and more.

