

## Self monitoring for a healthy lifestyle

Self monitoring is a useful way to keep you on track with healthy eating and exercise habits. The goal is to help you become more aware of the behaviours that are holding you back from better health.

Some common ways to self-monitor include:

- Food diaries or apps
- Focusing on positive changes to your health not associated with your weight.
- Monitoring your weight measurement or weight.
- Equipment such as pedometers
- Exercise and activity diaries

### Why is self-monitoring so important?

Regular eating patterns quickly become habit, which means that we don't have to think too much about it for the pattern to continue. Recording what you eat can make you more aware of the types and quantities of foods you are eating. This will provide you with feedback about habits that need changing to reach your goals.

### Food diaries

Keeping a food diary involves writing down everything you eat and drink. It can also be helpful to include the location, whether you are eating on your own, your emotions, how hungry you are feeling and how quickly you consumed a meal.

### Phone apps and online food diaries

To keep track of your daily food intake, web sites and phone apps are available.

The ones listed below have free versions available and are easy to use.

- Easy Diet Diary – The Australian Calorie counter by Xyris Software (App) iOS
- Control My Weight – Calorie counter by Calorie King (App) iOS
- My Fitness Pal\* - Calorie counter by My Fitness Pal Inc. (App) Android, iOS
- [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com)\*
- [www.calorieking.com.au](http://www.calorieking.com.au)

\* Please speak with your Dietitian on how to choose validated foods

## Monitoring your outcomes

Improving your eating habits or moving more has so many benefits. Take a note of these changes such as:

- Having more energy
- Improved mood
- Sleeping better
- Less pain
- Feeling fitter and stronger
- Breathing easier or less out of breath
- Improvements to your blood glucose levels or blood pressure.
- And the list goes on....

## Monitoring your weight

Weighing yourself can also be simple way to self-monitor, but try not to make it the only focus. Weigh yourself weekly on the same day and at the same time. Write down your weekly weights on a calendar, diary or record into a phone app or website.

## Waist measurements

Changes in your body shape can be monitored by measuring your waist circumference or by noting how your clothes or belt fits.

To measure your waist circumference with a tape measure; firstly, locate the midway position between the bottom of your ribs and hip bone. Breathe normally and then after you have breathed out measure around your body at this position.

## How to get started

On the following page you will find a food diary template that you can copy. Or if you prefer, rule up a small notepad with the same headings.

## Tips for self-monitoring

- Carry your diary with you wherever you go. Fill in your diary straight away rather than trying to remember everything at the end of the day.
- Write down all foods and drinks you have. Fill in as many columns as you can.
- You may feel tempted to not write down foods or behaviours you feel guilty about. This diary is for you. Writing down all foods and drinks will give you a better idea about where to start making changes.

Eating awareness diary		Day-	Date-								
Time	Hunger/fullness (0-10)	Where am I eating? Who am I eating with?	Type and amount of food. How quickly did I eat - slow/medium/fast?	hunger /fullness (0-10)	fruit	vegetables	grain foods	dairy foods or substitute	meat, fish or substitute	extras/discretionary foods	water
e.g.	3	Dining table with family	2 Weet-Bix with low-fat milk + half banana + instant coffee Ate at medium pace	7	√		√	√			
bkfast											
lunch											
dinner											
snacks											
Totals											



## How do I use my food diary to make changes?

After you have completed the diary, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer “no” to a question, this might be a good place to start to make a change.

- |                                                                                                                                                                          | Yes                      | No                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Am I eating 3 meals most days based on the core food groups of vegetables, fruit, lean meat, fish, chicken, wholegrain breads and cereals, and low fat dairy products? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Am I eating regular meals (no skipping or delaying meals by more than an hour)?                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Am I eating 2 pieces of fruit and 5 vegetables every day?                                                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Of the grain foods, am I having mostly whole grain breads and cereals (high fibre)?                                                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Am I mostly drinking mainly water, unsweetened tea, coffee or sugar free drinks?                                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Am I limiting extras or discretionary foods to once per week?                                                                                                          |                          |                          |
| - take-away foods such as pizza, commercial burgers, hot chips                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - cakes, muffins, pastries, pies, biscuits, chocolate and lollies                                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - salty foods such as processed meats (salami), crisps, salty snacks                                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Am I aware of how quickly I eat?                                                                                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 Am I aware of my hunger/fullness levels before and after eating?                                                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### **Monitoring exercise levels**

Walking is an inexpensive, easy and healthy way to exercise. Most people average 3,000 steps per day. For health benefits, aim for 10,000 steps a day.

### **Wearable step counters**

There are various step counters available. Pedometers are clip-on devices that count your steps and are inexpensive, easy to use and available from retail stores. These are meant to be worn every day and all day. Reset your pedometer for the next day. Every day, challenge yourself to increase your step count.

### **Online and app step recording**

Steps can be recorded online by accessing the 10,000 steps website, [www.10000steps.org.au](http://www.10000steps.org.au) developed by Central Queensland University. There is also a 10,000 steps app that can be downloaded for android and iPhones. The 10,000 steps website also provides advice about converting other exercise activities into steps.

### **Try it for a day**

Whether it is a paper diary, mobile phone app, or internet site, keeping a log of food eaten, steps walked, and positive outcomes noted. Start by trying it for just one day.

Things I can do to start self monitoring:

1.

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2.

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3.

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**For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist:** \_\_\_\_\_