

Extension News Article
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Try “Skill-power” to Change Health Habits

Many people have perfectly good intentions of eating healthier and moving more, but within a matter of weeks, those good intentions fall by the wayside. It is easier to be successful at lifestyle changes when you set small, attainable goals and learn new skills that will help you to succeed at adopting new health habits permanently.

That lack of success can't always be blamed by one's lack of willpower. In fact, for permanent lifestyle changes, it is more important to learn skills that will help you overcome obstacles that block your way to better health.

For example, you may eat at fast-food establishments. Skill-power includes setting goals to choose wisely, eat fast food less often, and learn how to make healthier choices. Here are some tips:

- 1) **Say no to combo meals.** It may seem like a real deal, but it's often a nutrition disaster. Just say no!
- 2) **Swap super-size meals for smart-sizes.** A regular burger, fries and drink at one fast-food retailer contains about 700 calories, 24 fat grams and about 10 teaspoons of sugar. If you get that retailer's “mega” burger meal

the values change to 1,730 calories, 46 fat grams, and 27 teaspoons of sugar. The 700 calorie meal is close to a third of the calories needed by many adults for a day, but the 1,730 calorie meal may represent one's total calorie and fat consumption for the whole day.

3) **Share a biggie-size meal with someone.** If the food you ordered comes in gigantic portions consider sharing it with someone. You'll save on calories, fat and costs.

4) **Save money and calories with kiddie meals.** Kid-sized meals are served in more reasonable portions. If you're still hungry, complete your meal with a piece of fruit.

5) **Substitute power drinks for soft drinks.** A 44-ounce soft drink has about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar in it. Skip the liquid candy (the soft drink) and enjoy the power of milk or orange juice. Water is a good choice too.

6) **Switch to healthful options.** Many of the fast-food chains are now offering healthier options like fresh fruits, salads and low-calorie dressings. Choose them.

Reward yourself for achieving small goals that will help you to maintain your motivation. Skill-power will always be stronger than willpower in terms of adopting a healthier lifestyle.