

## Keeping a Food Journal

Keeping a journal is essential to staying on track for weight loss. All of us tend to under or overestimate how much we actually eat. A food journal keeps us honest and develops good habits that will help keep the weight off after your diet is over.

<i>Food</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>With Who</i>	<i>Mood</i>	<i>Calories</i>
<i>Egg McMuffin</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8:30am</i>	<i>Alone</i>	<i>Tired</i>	<i>300</i>
<i>Autone's Tuna Fish Po'Boy</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1:30pm</i>	<i>Sandra</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>549</i>
<i>PP Farus White Chocolate Macadamia Cookie</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1:30pm</i>	<i>Sandra</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>260</i>

## Using Your Journal Effectively

- **Start with a physical journal.** Websites or apps on your phone may still be needed to look up calorie counts for foods without a nutrition label, but writing things down is proven to develop habits more quickly and effectively. You're already trying to change your eating habits; don't add learning an app on top of that.
- **Focus on one thing at a time.** Begin with just tracking what you eat without trying to change your habits. Food journaling will gently push you to pay more attention to what you're eating.
- **Be honest!** This food journal is for you and you alone. If you leave things out or fudge the numbers to make yourself look better on paper, you're only fooling yourself. It's hard, but you can do it!
- **Don't beat yourself up.** Just because you had a day when you went over your calories doesn't mean you've failed.
- **Examine your eating habits and look for patterns.** Do you tend to eat more when you're with a certain friend group, or by yourself? Do you tend to eat more calories when you're sad, happy, or bored? If you tend to over-eat when going out for lunch with certain co-workers, acknowledge that. It doesn't mean that you can't go out with them, just that you should pay more attention to where you go and what you order.
- **Don't give up!** It's okay to take a day off from tracking every now and then, but once you stop tracking, it's easy to go back to old habits. If you need a break from dieting, it's much better to spend a week eating maintenance calories than to throw caution to the wind. Eventually, you'll be able to eat healthy without relying on tracking everything, but make sure you've developed good eating habits before you stop using your food journal