



FACT! – Food Action!

FACT! Workbook

To help you discover and explore your food habits
and to change some of them,
in three topics:

Part 1: Food & Waste

Part 2: Food, Climate & Environment

Part 3: Food & Health

Part 4: Ripples on the water



FOOD ACTION PROGRAM: Part 3

A not-too-big change to your eating habits is...

- *The biggest single contribution you can make to your own health and that of your loved ones
- *The biggest single contribution you can make to reducing the impact of environmental degradation and climate change
- *A way to save money and support your local community

What's to not like?

“You are what you eat”

You probably already eat very differently from your grandparents.

Food is the biggest single contributor to the ‘epidemics’ of diseases like diabetes and cancer. Why? We’ve changed our eating habits – for the worse. If we can do it once, we can do it again: Let’s change our habits for the better.

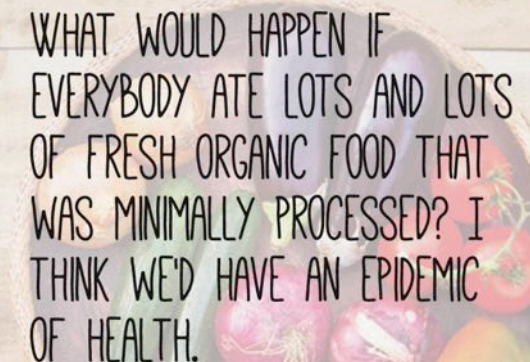
Be kind to yourself. Make changes gradually, and give your taste buds and digestive system time to catch up. Some foods are addictive: it may take one or two months for your system to adjust.

Regard it as an adventure – one that can improve your quality of life.

The good news is that this is easy to change, even without drastic lifestyle changes.

What and how should we buy in order to avoid spending too much, while also being as gentle as we can? That’s what this program is about.

Food for thought



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF EVERYBODY ATE LOTS AND LOTS OF FRESH ORGANIC FOOD THAT WAS MINIMALLY PROCESSED? I THINK WE'D HAVE AN EPIDEMIC OF HEALTH.

Dr. Andrew Saul

FOODMATTERS.TV



FOOD & HEALTH

In a nutshell: we tend to eat too much food of the kind that used to be called 'empty calories', and not enough of the stuff we need to stay healthy.

This is not about moralizing, or 'going on a diet' – or losing weight. It's about exploring what foods are healthy *for you*, and eating more of them. In general you'll find that the 'goodies' tend to be rich in minerals and vitamins, so you also save money on dietary supplements

Invitations to action

IT'S ABOUT QUALITY

Go organic
Less is more
Adbusting
'Superfoods'?

IT'S ABOUT HABITS

Reality check
On the sugar trail
Paint a healthy meal
Fat: villain or hero?
Home cooking not (only) for dummies

IT'S ABOUT STRESS – OR NOT

Resist the weight of expectation
Wellbeing comes in all shapes
Health check

EASY COOKING

Beetroot falafel
Lentil & leftover soup

Food for thought

Modern industrial crops are not bred for healthy eating but for high yield, ease of transport, and fast growth. These vegetables, grains, meat and fish nourish us less than organically or traditionally produced food. And: conventionally farmed food may contain traces of pesticides and other chemicals.

And what about food processing and additives? Sometimes the list of ingredients is so long, and the print so small, that it's almost impossible to figure out what to avoid. More and more people are developing allergies to foods and to additives.

Fortunately, there are some actions we can take to protect ourselves.

It's about quality: Go organic

Why act

There's the sheer pleasure of savouring locally grown fruit when it comes into season. Have you noticed how little flavour many out-of-season fruits and vegetables have? It's not surprising: when you buy seasonal products from local producers you're getting fresh, nutritious food.

Beyond that, you are also investing in food that has a small footprint: saving energy on transport and/or artificial heating or cooling.

Recipe for action

A good sign that something is in season is that the price drops – particularly for local produce. These are not the reduced prices that many stores offer on nearly-best-by produce, but the genuine across-

the-board price drops. That's your signal to give the family a treat!

You can also try this:

- * For an entire week eat only locally seasonal fruit and vegetables. Is it possible?
- * Search out new recipes for the vegetables you know best
- * Share your experience with others

In harsh climates, there may be no readily available options for fruit and vegetables during the coldest (or hottest) months.

- * Frozen and otherwise preserved food can carry you over to the next season
- * You can also investigate the best import options: food that is in season where it is produced, and with as short a distance as possible to travel.



Expected results

You save money as well as waste. You spend less time shopping.



It's about quality: Less is more

Why act

Processed foods are wonderful. They save us time, and they help preserve food. But... and it's a BIG but... modern processed foods may be so degraded that they simply don't nourish us.

So as far as possible let's distinguish between useful and harmful processing. Generally speaking: the less processing, the more quality.

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**IF YOU
CANNOT
PRONOUNCE IT,
DON'T EAT IT.**

COMMON SENSE

Recipe for action

Useful processing – examples:

- * Butter and cheese-making (though 'processed cheese' may contain unwanted additives)
- * Other ways of preserving milk, like yoghurt (make sure it's 'live', ie still contains the useful bacteria)
- * Jam, juice and pickles make good use of surplus fruit
- * Dried herbs and fruits add year-round flavour to your cooking
- * Bottled or canned fruit, vegetables, fish... if free of additives, can help vary the menu
- * Freezing: great for single items without additives

Salting and smoking

Salted/smoked fish and meat may be a health hazard. Especially heavily processed deli products.

'Refining' – sounds good?

It mostly means taking out the healthy components and possibly adding chemicals. Look instead for

- * 'Whole' foods, and especially grain products like rice, bread, flour, pasta: find which suit your palate, digestive system, and wallet
- * Alternatives to 'refined' sugar – see On the sugar trail

Parboiled or similarly prepared

Generally harmless and can be a great time-saver.

'Just add...'

The most convenient convenience 'foods' MAY be healthy, but may contain many additives. Check!

Expected results

Significantly reduced risk of a whole host of illnesses, from cancer and diabetes to asthma.

It's about quality: Adbusting

Why act?

Food advertisements often supply us with misleading information. It is particularly true if they want to convince us of how healthy it is to consume certain products. It may even be presented as 'independent research', and still be misleading.

Particularly harmful are ads aimed at children, often carrying a message that 'normal' or healthy food is old-fashioned. The statistics are from the USA but are also unfortunately common elsewhere.

You will need

- * Persistence in scrutinizing the fine print of product labels.
- * A few hours to gather information and locate authentic sources of information.

Recipe for action

1. Read it!

- * Check on the labels of 'light' or 'diet' products what they actually contain: their fat and sugar content as well as the presence of any artificial flavours, flavour enhancers, thickeners or other additives.
- * Don't be misled, check what the terms 'natural', 'homemade' or 'farmyard' mean on a product.

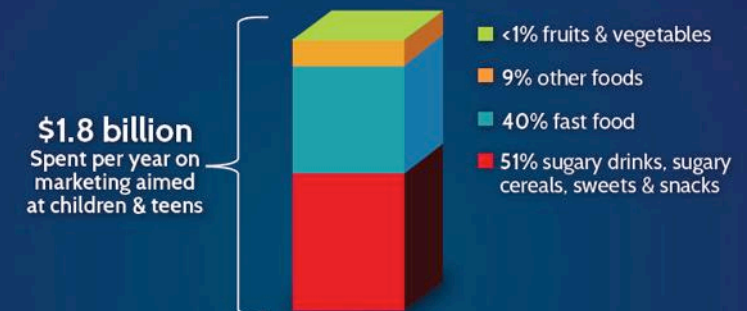
2. Try a different one!

- * Go over your regular shopping list now with a different eye. Is there something on it you would rather replace – with all this information in mind?
- * During the week, look for better, affordable products to replace 1-3 items.
- * Tell your family about your results

Expected results

Many good decisions, knowledge that will help you interpret labels and make better choices to protect your health and your family; and new favourites.

The truth about food marketing



It's about quality: 'Superfoods'?

Why act?

The idea that some foods are especially healthy has been spreading. More than 50 items are now found in most 'superfood' lists.

You can certainly enhance your immune system, energy, and general health if you find out which foods are best *for you*.

One theory makes the link with your blood group: for instance, while kale would be rated as very healthy for everyone, other foods might not be.

Recipe for action

Learn about Superfoods, what criteria a food needs to meet, and what their benefits are.

Find out which ones are grown or produced locally, and which ones are affordable for you.

Try them!

Especially in smoothies, you can combine many superfoods at once. Children love smoothies, too!

Expected results

A real nutrient kick for you and your family – every day! What could be better?





It's about habits: Reality check

Why act?

In business there's an old adage: "What you measure, you can change." A simple log is a great basis for deciding whether you'd like to change something.

Recipe for action

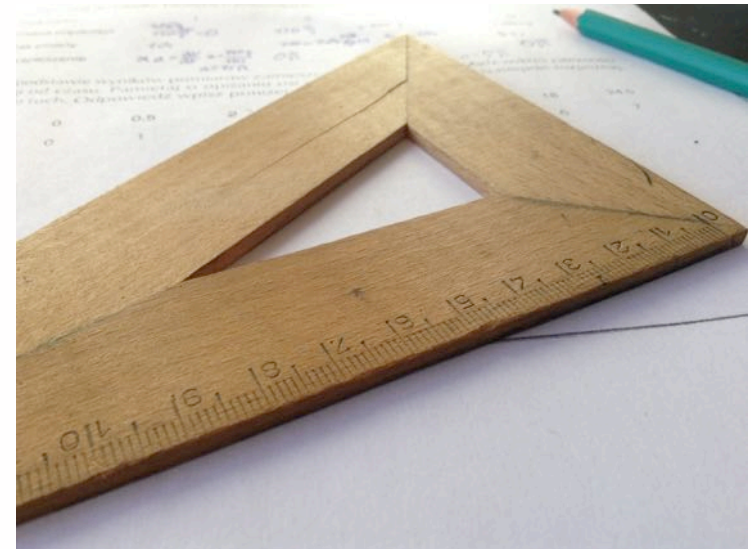
For a few days, keep a log of approximately what you eat and drink. An example of a simple log is shown in Annexe 1.

- * Fill it in for at least 3 days, one of which is a free day (if you feel like doing it for a whole week, even better)
- * Summarize your food habits in a normal week
- * Start thinking about whether there is something you'd like to change, based on your general health and the tips given here
- * Make a list for yourself of what you would like to change

At the end of the program, fill in the log again. Did you succeed in making the changes? If not, do you still want to do it, or are you satisfied? Did it make a difference? What obstacles did you meet?

Expected results

You will take more control of your own health – it's a good feeling to know you can do it.



It's about habits: On the sugar trail

Why act?

The consumption of sugar, like meat, tends to increase with income. And unlike meat, it's almost *never* good for you.

What's worse: it's addictive, so it's 'smuggled' into more and more processed food to make you keep wanting more. Look particularly at soft drinks – a major source of sugar for many families.

Recipe for action

Switching to artificial sweeteners is *not* a good alternative. There are a couple of natural sweeteners that are claimed to be healthy: xylitol and stevia. The biggest challenge is probably reading the small print on the product descriptions.

- * Eliminate soft drinks from the menu: tap water is best when it's good quality; plain, or flavoured with (organic!) fruit: shop around for tasty alternatives for special occasions. If you DO buy sweetened drinks, buy the small sizes
- * Reduce the number of meals that include cake or dessert – e.g. try limiting to weekends, or maximum once a day
- * Review your intake of sweet snacks. Is there something else you could enjoy instead? Think of nuts, seeds, and fruit.

Remember that sugar is addictive, so give it time – try your new habits for 6 weeks before deciding whether or not to continue.

Expected results

Better general health, lowered risk of diabetes and a number of other sugar-related illnesses; less 'taste' for sweet things, enabling you to reduce even more.

Cost savings, if you cut down desserts: seasonal fresh fruit is generally cheaper.





It's about habits: Paint a healthy meal

Why act?

Balance and diversity are keys to a healthy diet. Some researchers claim that food of the same colour tends to contain much the same nutrients; so painting a pretty picture with your food, putting different colours on the plate, is one way to ensure you get a good mix of the nutrients needed for health.

Recipe for action

Check your plate before serving. Is there something of a different colour you could add?

Observe your current eating habits. Do they tend towards certain colours? Some people favour brown and white, for instance; others are strong on green but miss the red.

Look for foods you like – or have never tried – that have a different colour. Test how you can add them regularly.

Expected results

This is probably the easiest single action towards healthier eating!

You may experience not only less need for supplements but also a healthier appetite! Yes, research also shows that an attractive plate stimulates the digestive juices.



It's about habits: Fat – villain or hero?

Why act?

We need fat in our diets, for example as 'brain food' – and, it must be the right kind and reasonable quantity.

In the fast-changing eating habits of today, many people have begun to eat more of the unhealthy kind, whereas some get too little fat.

Recipe for action

Rule of thumb: the less fat is 'treated', the better it is. For instance, avoid margarine and anything labelled 'light'.

- * Make sure your kitchen staples include virgin oils (olive, coconut...) and organic butter.
- * Look out for snacks, especially those with palm oil. Can be almost anything from chips to chocolate. Make your own snacks! For instance, toast seeds and nuts with a very little butter or oil, and sprinkle with a little salt.
- * Boil or bake food in preference to frying; fry quickly, not too hot, little fat, no salt until after cooking

Expected results

More energy and better general health, and in the long term, better powers of concentration.

Huge benefits for climate and environment when you cut out palm oil: some plantations are certified as 'sustainable', though the oil from them can be hard to trace.

It's about habits: Home cooking

Why act?

Home cooking helps to reduce the money you spend on processed food and to keep track of potentially harmful additives.

It can also reduce the amount of time, travel and money you spend on eating out, which may also be good for your health unless you have access to a good 'sustainable food' restaurant.

Recipe for action

- * Make it easy: if you're an inexperienced cook, look for a children's cook-book that appeals to you; and ask the best cook you know for tips on basics
- * Make it fast: fast food can be good food – at home. For instance, Jamie Oliver's 15-minute meals... that's less time than it takes to wait for a restaurant order!
- * Make for tomorrow (too); invest in good packaging, for a lunch-pack or another dinner
- * You may not even need a kitchen! Try some raw-food recipes, you may be surprised. You'll find a couple in Part 4.



Expected results

Fewer harmful additives give better general health and help prevent or alleviate allergies. More money in your wallet. The climate and environment benefit from reduced packaging, too.

It's about stress: Resist expectations

Why act?

Stress caused by the expectations and opinions of others can affect what we eat, how we eat, and how we feel about our bodies, our food, and ourselves.

Guilt is a terrible seasoning for food.

Recipe for action

Some parents feel guilty about possibly not giving their families nourishing food. If you follow at least some of the recommendations in this workbook, you can tell yourself you're on the right track. What you can't easily change today, maybe you can do next week, or next month.

Some people who are classified as 'overweight' feel guilty about almost anything they eat, which generally sets up a vicious circle: the guilt leads to hunger, especially for unhealthy snacks. See 'Fitness Comes in All Sizes'.

Some people feel guilty about not eating up everything put before them, for many reasons. See the chapter on Food Waste.

You may have your own private demons insisting that you eat or not eat in a particular way: the voice of a parent, news items, the attitudes of health-care staff.

Try giving them a vacation. If you're part of a Food Action team, ask the team or coach for help.

Expected results

Tailoring your ambition to *your* priorities brings immediate stress relief and improved wellbeing.



It's about stress: Health check

Why act?

To be sure, there are health aspects of body weight. If you have very little flesh on your bones you have only a small buffer between you and famine or injury; if you have a lot, you may put a strain on your bones and be more liable to certain chronic illnesses.

But more importantly:

- * People do differ, and what is a healthy weight for one may be inappropriate for another
- * Focusing on weight rather than fitness is a classic example of what not to do:
- * Someone who has been overweight from childhood is unlikely to become healthily slim, for very good physiological reasons

Recipe for action

'Energy follows attention': focusing on what you *don't* want is a good way to get more of it. Focus instead on what you *do* want.

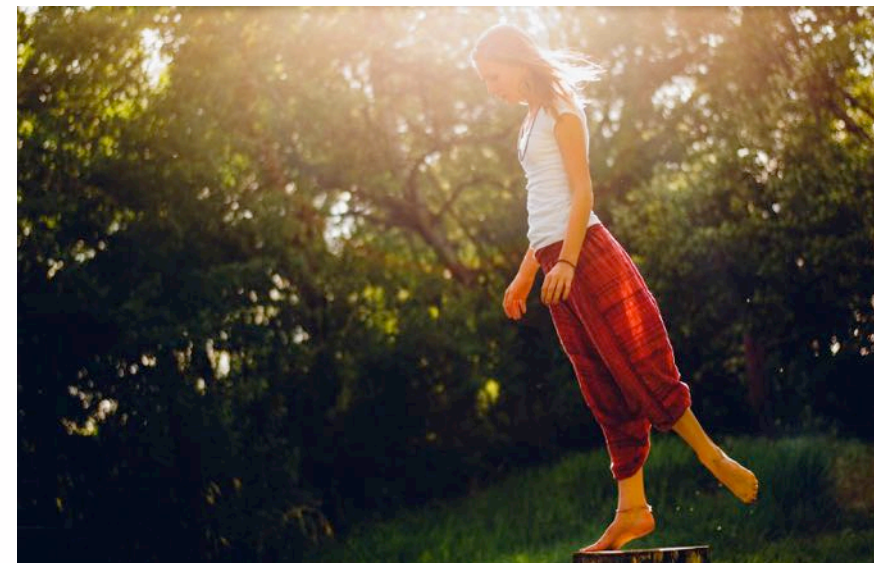
The current focus in many countries on obesity as a disease in itself is for these reasons counter-productive. It stigmatizes fat people, focuses on their size to the detriment of their fitness, and gives rise to stress that has the opposite of the intended effect.

No matter your weight, you can aim for fitness and quality of life with a healthy diet, and reasonable physical exercise.

Try the health check in Annexe 2!

Expected results

A fitter you!



Easy cooking: Beetroot falafel

You need

- * 250g cooked chickpeas
- * 1 beetroot (150g approx.)
- * 1 red onion
- * 1 garlic clove
- * ½ bunch of coriander
- * 2 tbsp oat flakes
- * Rapeseed oil, salt, pepper

How to do it

1. Rinse chick peas.
2. Peel and dice the beetroot.
3. Put one tbsp of oil in a pan and heat. Sauté one chopped red onion and one chopped garlic clove at medium heat until soft. Then add the diced beetroot and cook for two more minutes.
4. Put the mix in a big bowl and add chick peas, chopped coriander, oat flakes, salt and pepper. Purée everything and form into small balls.
5. Leave in fridge for 20 min, then bake at 200 degrees for 30 minutes.

Serve straight from the oven with mixed salad.

What to expect

Start an hour and a quarter before you want to eat. The actual working time is less than half an hour.

For the ravenously hungry you can add your favourite rice, potato, or other 'filler' dish; or make a pasta salad.

If you want a cold sauce, try plain salted yoghurt (with or without crushed garlic), or Thai sweet chili sauce.

Thanks to our German colleagues for this recipe!

Easy cooking: Lentil & leftover soup

You need

For this, we found one small onion, one large carrot, a small piece of swede (rutebago) and one of bell pepper; and a handful of leftover cooked rice. It would have been nice to top with chopped parsley or coriander (cilantro) but we had none left over...

For 3-4 people

- * 2 dl red lentils
- * ca 300 g tomato: fresh, peeled, chopped; or preserved
- * Any small quantities (raw and cooked) of vegetables
- * 1 tbsp cooking oil, eg coconut oil
- * Seasoning: salt and pepper to taste
- * Optional other seasonings, eg chili, garlic, ginger, rosemary, thyme, bay leaves

How to do it

- * Peel raw root vegetables and chop into ca 1 cm cubes
- * Heat the oil in a big pan, and fry the root vegetables gently
- * Rinse the lentils, add to the pan, add water to cover (and a bit more)
- * Simmer for about 15 mins until the water is absorbed
- * Add the tomato and seasonings, as well as any raw vegetables
- * Simmer for another 15-20 mins - add water if it looks like boiling dry
- * Cut up the cooked leftover vegetables and add to the pan
- * Add enough water to make it the thickness you like
- * Bring to the boil and simmer for 2-3 minutes

What to expect

Start an hour before you want to eat. Working time: ca 15 minutes.

This is a nourishing meal at very low cost, in money as well as time.

Serve with a green salad - and bread, if you like.





Annexe 1: Sample food log

Why act?

Do you know what you eat and drink in your 'normal' week?

Filling in the log for at least 3 days, of which one is a free day, will help you see where action will help you make more Food Action progress.

Recipe for action

Make a note of the days you keep a log, in the 'Days logged' section.

For each day, mark every serving you eat or drink, like this:



When you've kept the log for as many days as you choose, work out approximately what that means in terms of servings per week.

Days logged

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7

Expected results

Are you happy with your food habits? If not, if you feel you can go further on the 'sustainable food' journey, you will find it easy to pick out from the log the best candidates for Food Action.

Servings logged, all days	Food types	That makes: servings per week
	Meat and fish	
	Vegetables	
	Fruit	
	Nuts	
	Rice/potato/pasta...	
	Sweet snack/dessert	
	Salty/fatty snack	
	Soft drink	
	Fruit juice	
	Beer	
	Wine	
	Spirits	

Annexe 2: Easy health check

Why act?

This is your own satisfaction check. It's easy to get caught up in expectations, our own or others'. Here's where we stop and reflect.

Recipe for action

1. Answer the questions
How do you feel about your health?
2. If not satisfied:
* Decide what you would most like to improve, and look through the suggestions in this booklet for inspiration

* Consider a professional health check

3. You feel over- or underweight?
=> See also the text 'Fitness comes in all sizes'

I get colds and other minor illnesses	Almost never	Seldom	Now and then	Often	Very often
My appetite for life/ general energy	High	Mostly high	Average	Below par	Poor
My weight is	Ok with me		Could be better		A problem
...if not I regard myself as	Over-weight				Under-weight
Generally my health is	Excellent	Good enough	Could be better	Not good	Poor



HOW WAS THAT?

Progress!

If your regular diet was 'typical western', your biggest challenge may be to reduce the amount of sugar and meat that you eat.

Remember that sugar is particularly addictive; give yourself time to kick the habit. For most people it takes at least six weeks to adapt to a lower intake.

Are there more recipes you would like to try – recipes for action or for food? Put a reminder note in your diary on or on the fridge door!

The adventure isn't over yet!

In the fourth part of this program you'll discover more things to do, and more food recipes to try. And an invitation to celebrate your progress.

You can also visit our [international web site](#), with a [reference library](#) and [other goodies](#).

Food for thought

NEVER DOUBT
◆◆ THAT A
SMALL GROUP OF
THOUGHTFUL
COMMITTED
CITIZENS ◆◆
CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD:

◆◆ INDEED
IT'S THE ONLY
THING THAT
EVER HAS. ◆◆

Margaret Mead