**Day 23**

**Title: Healthy Substitutions to Keep You on Track**

Following a healthy diet or watching your calories shouldn’t mean giving up the pleasure of eating. But it might mean switching out something you’re used to eating for a healthier version. Here are some suggestions to get you thinking about how you can stay on track to eat well and enjoy it, too.

**Breakfast**

Do you start your day with a stop at the nearby coffee shop? That fancy beverage may be costing you more than just money. A flavored latte is loaded with calories and added sugar. Mochas often have even more. Don’t blow through a few hundred calories and a few days’ worth of added sugar on your way to work! Get your caffeine fix with regular coffee. Even if you add a little milk and sugar, you’re still in a better spot than you were before.

If you’ve tried regular coffee and it’s just not working out for you, go with nonfat milk and skip the sweeteners. Save those high-calorie, sweetened coffees for special days.

For food, grab plain yogurt and fruit. Or try oatmeal with walnuts. Add sweetness with dried fruit instead of brown sugar or honey.

**Lunch**

Lunch can be difficult if your options are limited to what’s close by and quick enough to fit in a lunch break. You can still eat a healthy lunch with a few strategic choices. Here are a few options:

* Pizza places. While eating pizza every day will probably keep you from achieving your balanced diet or weight goal, you don’t have to give it up completely. Order one slice and choose thin crust with veggies. If you want a little bit of meat, stick with just one meat topping, and try a lower fat option, like chicken or turkey sausage. Add a salad with vinaigrette dressing on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing before you get a bite of lettuce, so you get a little bit of flavor, but not a lot of extra calories.
* Mexican.Try fajitas with lean meat and lots of grilled vegetables. Add salsa instead of sour cream and cheese. Ask for corn tortillas instead of flour. Or, choose whole wheat tortillas if that’s an option. Pass on the free tortilla chips, or limit yourself to just a few. Since they’re often fried, tortilla chips have a surprising amount of calories. And don’t forget to watch your portions! Save half of what you get for another meal.

**Dinner**

Cooking at home gives you more control over what you eat compared to eating out. But not all cooking methods (or ingredients) are created equally. Try these cooking methods to get a flavorful, healthy meal that you and your family will enjoy.

* Comfort food.Instead of fried chicken, try oven baked chicken (trust us, it can be quite delicious). Use herbs to add flavor without sodium. You can still have mashed potatoes, but instead of loading up on butter and milk, boil the potatoes in low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth. Don’t forget to include a green vegetable to round out your meal.
* Beyond rice and white potatoes. White rice and white potatoes are easy go-to dishes, but there are lots of alternatives which provide more nutrition and flavor and no more or even less calories. Try roasted vegetables, like parsnips, carrots, onions, peppers, and cauliflower. Swap rice for quinoa, or try half quinoa and half brown rice. You can also cook grains in vegetable broth for more flavor.

**Dessert**

If you want dessert, look for things that are naturally sweet, like fruit. For the most flavorful fruits, get the ones that are in season where you live. Try baking them with spices, like nutmeg or cinnamon. Or make a cobbler using oats, flour, and a little bit of sugar for a topping.

Even chocolate is not off limits, as long as it’s a small piece. Choose dark chocolate and take time to savor it. You could even try freezing it, since it will take longer to eat it. Or make your own hot chocolate, using regular or non-dairy milk, cocoa, and a teeny-tiny bit of sugar.

**A final word**

If you think healthy food can’t be delicious, give some of these substitutions and alternatives a shot. Making small changes here and there to add flavor without adding the unwanted stuff can really add up and pay off. What small change can you make today?