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What you can't see can't hurt you. Sorta. The Home Eating Environment Checklist

Did you know that *where* you store food actually influences what you eat? Keeping unhealthy foods within eye sight makes them more tempting, while a bowl full of in-season fruit can increase your craving for the low-cal treat.

Studies show that you can set up your home so that you eat fewer calories and make healthy decisions. This Home Eating Environment Checklist offers advice on simple ways to make improvements.

Answer the following questions, and find out what the experts recommend.

1. What do you see? Look around your kitchen (countertop, top of refrigerator, table) and mark which of the following items are visible and readily accessible.

- Fresh fruit
- Nuts
- Snack crackers or chips
- Soft drinks
- Candy
- Cookies, cakes, cupcakes, muffins
- Nothing

Food that is in sight cues us to eat, even if we are not hungry or if we were planning a healthy snack. The best way to reduce unconscious eating is to keep foods in cupboards or in the refrigerator. If you must have foods on the counter, make them healthy foods like a mix of fruits in an attractive bowl or a small dish of nuts.

2. What is the approximate size in inches, rim-to-rim, of your dinner plates?

- 9 10 11 12

The average U.S. dinner plate has gotten bigger over the last 20 years and is now 12 or more inches. Studies show that people who eat off of typical 12-inch plates regularly consume 27 percent more at meals than those who eat off of smaller 10-inch plates. Look for plates that are 10 inches in diameter or less.

3. What is the shape of the most-used beverage glasses?

- Narrow Wide

Reach for a narrow glass. You'll think you're consuming more than you are.

4. What is the approximate size in inches of the most frequently used bowls, rim-to-rim?

- 3 - 4 5 - 6 7 - 8

Like plates, bowls have gotten bigger over the past two decades. Refill a three- or four-inch bowl rather than use one seven- or eight-inch bowl.

5. Is there a television in the kitchen, dining room, or in the room where you usually eat?

- Yes No

Studies show that we eat more with the television on. Not only are we not thinking about what, how much, or how fast we are eating if we are engrossed in our favorite television show, but we are also bombarded with food advertisements. Make it a rule to not have the television on during family meals. Better yet, get the television out of the kitchen or dining room.

6. Is there a computer in the kitchen, dining room, or in the room where you usually eat?

- Yes No

If you use your computer to view videos or television shows, you are just as likely to engage in mindless eating as if you were in front of the television.

7. How do you store snacks?

- In the original bag In small, snack-sized bags

Divide your snacks into small snack-sized bags. You'll satisfy your cravings with fewer calories and will be less likely to munch your way through a whole bag.

8. If you have soft drinks (including sweetened fruit drinks), where do you store them?

- Refrigerator Cabinet/pantry/basement I don't have them

Hide them in a cabinet or basement, or put one or two in the refrigerator. The extra steps of getting it out of the cabinet and filling a glass with ice will help reduce your consumption.

9. How many different kinds of fruits do you have (include fresh, frozen, dried, and canned)?

- 0 1-2 3-4 5+

Research suggests that having a variety on hand increases consumption. That's bad if you are looking at ten different kinds of cookies, but not if you have various fruits in your home. Have at least five varieties. Fresh, frozen, or canned without any added sugar are your best bets.

10. How many different kinds of vegetables do you have (include fresh, frozen and canned)?

- 0 1-2 3-4 5+

The more options you have, the more likely you are to add vegetables to a snack or meal. Dark orange vegetables, like sweet potatoes, and dark leafy greens, like spinach, are loaded with nutrients. Canned and frozen may have the same nutritional quality as fresh and add variety year round. Be cautious though if you have hypertension; many canned vegetables have a lot of sodium.

11. When you open a cupboard or pantry, what items are at eye level?

- Salty snacks Sweet snacks Cookies High-sugar cereals
 Nuts Dried Fruit Canned products

Hide the junk. If you have it, put it on a lower shelf or behind the healthy stuff. We eat what we see, so put the good stuff like nuts, dried fruit, and healthy canned foods like fruit packed in water at eye level.
