

So you fell off the wagon during the holidays—you're only human. Here's a sane, simple eating plan that will get you back on the path to healthy living. **by Elizabeth Fassberg**

It's so easy to get off the healthy track. All of us want to take good care of ourselves—eat nutritious foods, exercise—but life gets in the way, especially during the holidays, and we just don't keep up our good habits. Here is a special plan that puts you on a one-week program of healthful eating and exercise. This nutritious, painless diet will make you feel

so good at the end, it's almost guaranteed to leave you with better—long-lasting—habits. It's a sensible, easy-to-follow regimen—one on which you'll eat nourishing low-fat foods without feeling deprived. You should lose up to two pounds by the end of the week, depending on how much you exercise and how much you normally eat.

I've based the recipes in the week-long plan below on recommendations for a healthy diet from both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council. The calorie count each day is 1,200 to 1,500; fewer than 30 percent of the calories come from fat, and fewer than 10 percent come from saturated fat. The sodium content is 3,000 mg, or 3 grams of salt per day. (Note: If you have hypertension, use salt substitutes in the recipes that call for salt.) To keep your temptation level down, I've included a list of low-cal snacks (see box, page 69) that you can eat during the day when you feel hungry or as if you're about to binge. Just be sure to include them in the day's total calorie count.

seven

THE SEVEN-DAY PLAN

The meal plan contains high-nutrient foods that are low in calories without a lot of fat. All the recipes are for one person but can be doubled easily. It's more fun to follow this plan with another person, if possible—so if you can, convince a friend to join you. If you have family, get them involved.

To reward yourself this week, indulge in non-food treats (candles, dance music, a manicure and pedicure, a movie, a yoga class, or going to a museum or botanical garden), and give yourself as much time as you want to enjoy them. Or invite some friends over and prepare one of your nutritious meals for them.

How To Work Out This Week

You'll lose weight faster and more efficiently if you exercise. And, of course, exercising is good for your health overall—it can help prevent heart disease, high blood pressure, adult-onset diabetes, and certain cancers. Do some form of aerobic exercise each day this week, and continue working out regularly afterward. If you haven't exercised in a while, take a walk for 30 minutes each day. If you're already working out, continue with your normal routine and try to do a bit more.

This is how weight loss works: One pound of body fat contains 3,500 calories. If you want to lose one pound in a week, you must cut 3,500 calories out of your food consumption that week. You can do this by cutting back on 3,500 calories, or by burning 3,500 extra calories from your diet through exercise (see box, "Activities That Burn 150 Calories") or by performing a combination of the two. And keep these important food facts in mind: 1 g carbohydrate = 4 calories; 1 g fat = 9 calories; 1 g protein = 4 calories; 1 g alcohol = 7 calories.

Activities That Burn 150 Calories

- Walk 1½ miles in 35 minutes.
- Run 1½ miles in 15 minutes.
- Wash windows for 45 to 60 minutes.
- Wheel self in wheelchair for 30 to 40 minutes.
- Bicycle five miles in 30 minutes.
- Dance fast for 30 minutes.
- Push a stroller 1½ miles in 30 minutes.
- Swim laps for 20 minutes.
- Jump rope for 15 minutes.
- Shovel snow for 15 minutes.
- Walk stairs for 15 minutes.
- Garden for 30 to 45 minutes.

days

that could change your life

monday

Wake up 20 minutes earlier than usual, and make a list of goals. Don't make them impossible to achieve. Then divide them into two categories—short-term and long-term. They can include weight-loss and fitness goals, professional goals, and personal goals. (Tape the list to your mirror and add to it whenever you come up with an idea.)

Breakfast STRAWBERRY-BANANA OATMEAL

- 1 cup water
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 small banana (½ cup), chopped
- 4 strawberries, chopped
- ½ cup dry quick oats
- cinnamon to taste
- 1½ cups skim milk (to add to cereal and/or to coffee and tea throughout the day)

1. In a small pan, boil water with ¼ tsp. salt. Add fruit, stir, then add oats. Boil for 1 minute, stirring occasionally, until water is absorbed. Let sit 2 minutes. Serve warm.
2. Sprinkle with cinnamon and milk.

Per serving, 392 calories; 20% (21 g) protein, 9% (4 g) fat, 71% (72 g) carbohydrate, 7 mg cholesterol; 459 mg sodium.

Lunch WHITE BEAN BURRITO

- 1 8-inch low-fat whole wheat tortilla
- ½ cup canned cannellini or white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 Tb. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. minced garlic
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3 large spinach leaves, washed, with stems removed
- ½ cup chopped tomatoes
- 2 Tb. chopped red onion
- 1 cucumber, sliced
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 green apple

1. In small bowl, mash beans with fork until almost smooth. Add lemon juice, garlic, and salt; mix well.

2. Place tortilla on a flat surface. Spread with white bean mixture. Put spinach on top in a single layer. Then add tomatoes and onions. Roll up and cut in half.

3. Slice cucumber and sprinkle with salt. Eat with the sandwich.

4. Wash, core, and quarter an apple for dessert.

Per serving, 385 calories; 16% (17 g) protein, 4% (2 g) fat, 80% (85 g) carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol; 1,273 mg sodium.

Dinner MULTICOLORED VEGETARIAN PASTA

This pasta and vegetable recipe actually makes enough for two servings. After making it, divide the dish in half, wrap up the portion that you don't eat, and save it for your lunch tomorrow. Time-saving tip: You can buy the vegetables precut.

Slice pita in half so that you have two half moons. Spread 1 Tb. cranberry sauce on each piece. Place 3 leaves of spinach on each, then divide turkey and place on each side.

DESSERT

- 1 banana
- 1 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 tsp. honey

Slice banana into yogurt; stir in honey.
Per serving, 704 calories: 32% (57 g) protein, 8% (7g) fat, 60% (11g) carbohydrate. 82 mg cholesterol; 1,070 mg sodium.

Dinner UNTRADITIONAL SPINACH SALAD

- 4 oz. pounded, skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 3 cups spinach, washed (or prepackaged spinach)
- 1 hard-boiled egg white, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced mushrooms

1. Turn on broiler. In small pan lined with foil and sprayed with vegetable spray, add chicken breast. Cook chicken about 4 minutes on each side. Remove from oven and slice into strips. Set aside.
2. Rip spinach into bite-size pieces and place in medium-size bowl. Sprinkle egg white and mushrooms on top, then top with chicken.

HONEY MUSTARD-YOGURT-DILL DRESSING

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup nonfat plain yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup skim milk
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. chopped dill
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt

1. Whisk together yogurt and milk. Add mustard, honey, dill, and salt and continue to whisk until everything is combined well. Pour over salad.

TOASTED-CHEESE PITA

- 1 whole wheat pita
- 1 Tb. Parmesan cheese
- Vegetable spray

1. Turn on broiler. Toast pita about 1 minute on each side. Spritz with vegetable spray and sprinkle with cheese. Place back under broiler about 1 minute, or until cheese is melted.
2. Slice pita into quarters and serve warm with salad.

Per serving, 396 calories: 42% (43 g) protein, 15% (7 g) fat, 43% (45 g) carbohydrate. 71 mg cholesterol; 1,331 mg sodium.

thursday

After you finish having dinner tonight, take a little time to truly indulge yourself: Fill up the bathtub with hot water and light some scented candles. Your muscles will really appreciate this after all of the exercise you've been doing. Browse through some of your favorite catalogues while you're soaking, and pick out something for yourself that costs a little more than you would normally spend. Go ahead, reward yourself—you deserve it.

Breakfast CINNAMON-RAISIN FRENCH TOAST

- 1 egg white
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup skim milk
- 2 slices cinnamon-raisin bread
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1 banana, sliced

1. In medium-size shallow bowl, whisk together egg white and skim milk.
2. Heat medium-size skillet on medium heat, then spray lightly with vegetable spray. Dip bread into egg white mixture so that both sides are covered, and place in pan. Cook about 2 minutes on each side, or until bread is lightly browned and egg white is cooked.
3. Spread honey on top of toast and serve warm, with banana.

Per serving, 259 calories: 13% (10 g) protein,

8% (3 g) fat, 79% (60 g) carbohydrate, 1 mg cholesterol; 262 mg sodium.

Lunch SALAD NIÇOISE PITA SANDWICH

- 1 8-oz. can light or white tuna in water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped, blanched* green beans, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces

- 3 Tb. minced red onion
- 1 8-inch whole wheat pita

Dressing

- 2 Tb. fat-free mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp. finely minced fresh ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt

1. In small bowl, mix tuna, green beans, and red onion. In another small bowl, mix mayonnaise, mustard, ginger, and salt.
2. Add dressing to tuna and mix together. Spoon tuna mixture into pita.

*To blanch green beans:

If you have a microwave, put beans in microwave-safe bowl with 2 Tb. water. Cook, covered on High for 2 minutes, or until beans are bright green and still crunchy. Cool in ice water. If you don't have a microwave, boil water in small pot. Once water is boiling, add beans and cook 1 minute. Drain immediately. Cool in ice water.

Per serving, 440 calories: 58% (64 g) protein, 8% (4 g) fat, 34% (36 g) carbohydrate, 68 mg cholesterol; 1,880 mg sodium. ▷ 97

Snacks

Here are some snacks—all of them 150 calories or under—that you can add to the week's meals to fill you up during the day. They should be planned for and included in your total daily calorie count.

1 medium apple	81 calories
1 oz. fat-free pretzels	108 calories
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup nonfat frozen yogurt	95 calories
1 cup frozen vegetables with soy sauce	140 calories
1 cup low-sodium tomato juice	41 calories
nonfat cappuccino (made with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup skim milk)	43 calories
4 cups air-popped popcorn	122 calories
baked potato with 2 tsp. nonfat sour cream	150 calories
1 cup fat-free soup	53 calories
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup nonfat sorbet	110 calories
1 cup cantaloupe with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fat-free cottage cheese	136 calories
1 frozen fruit bar	63 calories
1 cup fat-free hot cocoa	70 calories
1 cup strawberries	43 calories
1 cup mango slices	107 calories
1 medium orange	62 calories
1 medium grapefruit	74 calories
1 cup nonfat chocolate milk	144 calories
baked sweet potato with 2 tsp. maple syrup	130 calories

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Dinner

SPICY CHICKEN WITH MANGO SALSA

6 oz. skinless, boneless chicken breast

¼ tsp. cayenne

¼ tsp. salt

3 Tb. salsa

2 Tb. chopped mango

1. Place chicken between two pieces of waxed paper. Pound with mallet or can until about ¼ inch thick. Remove paper; sprinkle with cayenne and salt.

2. Heat small nonstick pan on medium heat. When pan is very hot, spray with vegetable spray and add chicken. Lightly brown on both sides. Turn heat down and cook about 3 minutes on each side or until meat is no longer pink on the inside.

3. In small bowl, mix together salsa and mango. Serve on top of chicken.

BROWN RICE

Once cooked, divide serving in half and save the rest for Saturday's lunch.

½ cup brown rice

1½ cup water

1. In small pot with cover, combine rice and water. Bring to boil on medium heat. Cover and lower heat to simmer about 45 minutes, until water is absorbed and rice is tender.

2. Put half of rice in a small container and save. Serve the other half with chicken and roast vegetables.

ROAST VEGETABLES

Once cooked, wrap half in plastic wrap and save for tomorrow's lunch.

1 large zucchini, sliced lengthwise into

¼-inch strips (about 2 cups)

1 large, yellow squash,

sliced lengthwise into ¼-inch strips

(about 2 cups)

2 cups red pepper, sliced into 2-inch strips

1 large red onion, sliced very thin

1 tsp. ground oregano

Vegetable spray

1. Turn on broiler. Place vegetables in a single layer on large baking sheet. Spray with vegetable cooking spray and sprinkle evenly with oregano.

2. Place under broiler for about 5 minutes on each side. Vegetables are done when softened and golden but not burned.

Per serving, 662 calories; 19% (33 g) protein, 7% (5 g) fat, 74% (124 g) carbohydrate, 63 mg cholesterol; 810 mg sodium.

friday

Plan to see a movie tonight with friends, and tell them you'll bring the popcorn—air-popped, of course. You can have 4 cups.

Breakfast

COLD CEREAL WITH SLICED STRAWBERRIES

1 cup fat-free cereal of your choice

1 cup skim milk

4 strawberries, sliced

1 cup orange juice

In bowl, add cereal and milk. Add strawberries on top. Serve with orange juice.

Per serving, 363 calories; 16% (16 g) protein, 5% (2 g) fat, 79% (77 g) carbohydrate, 4 mg cholesterol; 433 mg sodium.

Lunch

ROAST-VEGETABLE BURRITO

Use the vegetables from the night before.

1 whole wheat, low-fat tortilla

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

1 cup roast vegetables

½ cup shredded fat-free mozzarella

Place tortilla on flat surface. Spread mustard on tortilla. Add vegetables and cheese and roll up. Warm in a 350° oven about 12 minutes. Or place in microwave on High about 1 minute. Cut in half and enjoy.

APPLES WITH YOGURT AND CINNAMON

1 Granny Smith apple, washed, cored, peeled, and thinly sliced

½ cup plain nonfat yogurt

½ tsp. cinnamon

In medium-size bowl, add apple, yogurt, and cinnamon. Mix together and serve.

Per serving, 332 calories; 44% (30 g) protein, 4% (1 g) fat, 62% (54 g) carbohydrate, 7 mg cholesterol; 957 mg sodium.

Dinner

GRILLED HONEY-SOY SALMON

1½ tsp. mustard

1½ tsp. soy sauce

1 tsp. honey

6 oz. salmon filet

1. Turn on broiler. In small bowl, mix together mustard, soy sauce, and honey.

2. Place salmon on aluminum foil in small metal pan. Pour sauce over fish and spread evenly with back of small spoon.

3. Cook salmon 5 minutes, or until it has reached desired doneness.

ROASTED NEW POTATOES

2 small, new potatoes, washed well and quartered

2 tsp. fresh rosemary

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Spray small metal pan with vegetable spray. Add potatoes; spray with vegetable spray. Sprinkle with rosemary; cook 40 minutes, or until softened.

SALAD

2 cups mixed greens

¼ cup chopped red pepper

2 Tb. fat-free dressing or balsamic vinegar

Per serving, 568 calories; 31% (44 g) protein, 12% (8 g) fat, 57% (82g) carbohydrate, 88 mg cholesterol; 613 mg sodium.

saturday

Breakfast

EGG-WHITE-AND-MIXED-VEGETABLE SCRAMBLE

¼ cup chopped onion

5 mushrooms, sliced (about ½ cup)

¼ cup chopped tomato

¼ cup chopped zucchini

2 egg whites

2 Tb. skim milk

½ tsp. salt, or to taste

½ tsp. pepper, or to taste

¼ cup nonfat mozzarella cheese, shredded

1 slice nonfat toast

½ cup orange juice, or 1 orange, or grapefruit

1. Heat medium-size nonstick pan, spray with vegetable spray, then sauté onion about 1 minute, until softened but not brown. Add mushrooms, tomato, and zucchini and sauté about 3 minutes until vegetables are hot and softened. (Adjust heat if too hot.) Stir often.

2. Whisk together egg white and milk. Add to vegetable mixture; add in the salt and pepper. Sauté mixture about 1½ minutes, or until egg is cooked. Spread out in pan and sprinkle with mozzarella. Cook ½ minute more to melt cheese; serve warm with a slice of toast and orange juice.

Per serving, 253 calories; 35% (23 g) protein, 6% (2 g) fat, 59% (39 g) carbohydrate, 3 mg cholesterol; 868 mg sodium.

Lunch

RICE AND LENTIL SALAD

½ cup dry lentils

1 cup water

½ cup leftover brown rice from Thursday's dinner (warmed in microwave)

1 cup chopped cucumber

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½ cup chopped red pepper

2 Tb. balsamic vinegar

¼ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. black pepper

1 Tb. chopped parsley

1. Combine lentils and 1 cup water in small saucepan. Bring to a boil, then cover. Turn heat down to low and simmer, covered, 12 minutes or until lentils are soft but not mushy. Let cool to room temperature.

2. In the meantime, mix together rice, cucumber, red pepper, vinegar, and salt and pepper in bowl. Add lentils; stir lightly.

3. Sprinkle parsley on top and serve.

Per serving: 553 calories; 23% (32 g) protein, 4% (3 g) fat, 73% (104 g) carbohydrate. 0 mg cholesterol; 1,092 mg sodium.

Dinner

TOMATO AND SHRIMP PASTA

4 oz. dry spinach spaghetti

1 clove garlic, minced

5 shrimp, peeled to first knuckle and deveined

½ cup diced onion

½ cup diced tomato

½ cup sliced mushrooms

½ cup canned crushed tomatoes with basil

Salt and pepper, to taste

Hot, red pepper flakes, to taste

1. Cook pasta according to box instructions.

2. In small pan sprayed with vegetable spray, sauté garlic and shrimp 3 minutes on medium heat until shrimp is pink (it will finish cooking in the sauce.) Remove from heat.

3. In medium saucepan sprayed with vegetable spray, sauté onions on medium heat 1 minute until softened. Add tomatoes and mushrooms. Sauté 1½ minutes. Add crushed tomatoes; bring to boil. Add shrimp, reduce heat to low, and simmer 5 minutes, stirring often. Add salt, pepper, and pepper flakes.

4. Serve over cooked pasta.

SALAD

3 cups mesclun, washed and dried

2 Tb. your favorite fat-free dressing

2 cups cantaloupe, cut into cubes

Per serving, 668 calories; 18% (31 g) protein, 5% (4 g) fat, 77% (129 g) carbohydrate. 53 mg cholesterol; 815 mg sodium.

sunday

So you've made it through the week. You're conscious now of what you're putting into your mouth. Don't mess up today be-

cause you're hanging around the house, feeling good—keep moving, and burn up some calories. Buy a new C.D. and dance, dance, dance. Or go biking or skating with your kids. Good luck, and keep up your healthy eating and exercise habits in the weeks ahead. If you want to lose more weight, you can do so by keeping your daily caloric intake between 1,200 and 1,500. But don't go below that. Remember to watch your portion sizes, keep active, and, whenever possible, plan your meals and snacks in advance.

Breakfast

PANCAKES WITH BLUEBERRY-ORANGE SAUCE

1 cup skim milk

½ cup fat-free pancake mix

Sauce

1 cup unsweetened, frozen blueberries

½ cup orange juice

1 tsp. sugar

1. Follow package instructions and use vegetable spray and a nonstick skillet when cooking pancakes.

2. In small saucepan, combine blueberries, orange juice, and sugar. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally, then lower heat and simmer on low for 15 minutes, or until mixture has thickened somewhat (it should still be fairly thin). Let sit before serving.

Sauce can be made ahead and reheated before serving. Save some for later and pour it over frozen yogurt. Serving size: about 3 four-inch pancakes.

Per serving, 236 calories; 16% (10 g) protein, 6% (2 g) fat, 78% (48 g) carbohydrate. 4 mg cholesterol; 129 mg sodium.

Lunch

OPEN-FACE GRILLED PORTOBELLO, TOMATO, AND CHEESE SANDWICH

1 tsp. minced garlic

2 large portobello mushrooms, sliced into ½-inch strips

1 Tb. lemon juice

1 fat-free whole wheat pita (6 inches in diameter)

1 small tomato, sliced

½ cup fat-free dry farmer's cheese

salt and pepper, to taste

1. Heat medium-size saucepan. Add vegetable spray, garlic, and mushrooms. Sauté about 2 minutes, or until mushrooms are softened but garlic is not burned. Add lemon juice and stir. Remove from heat and set aside.

2. Turn on broiler. Toast pita about 1 minute on each side. Remove from oven and add mushrooms, tomato, and cheese. Put under broiler about 1 minute more, or until cheese is slightly melted.

3. Remove from oven. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and serve warm.

Per serving, 269 calories; 31% (23 g) protein, 7% (2 g) fat, 62% (44 g) carbohydrate. 10 mg cholesterol; 697 mg sodium.

Dinner

PORK CHOP WITH SWEET-POTATO-AND-DRIED-CRANBERRY PUREE

4 oz. center-cut loin chop

1 tsp. minced garlic

5 thin slices fresh ginger

2 tsp. low-sodium soy sauce

1. Heat small nonstick pan. Spray with vegetable spray and add garlic, ginger, and pork chop. Brown chop on both sides. Turn heat down to low and add soy sauce. Cook about 3 minutes on each side, or until meat of pork chop is no longer pink.

SWEET-POTATO-AND-DRIED CRANBERRY PUREE

½ medium sweet potato, about 6 oz.

½ cup skim milk

½ oz. dried cranberries

¼ tsp. salt, or to taste

1. Place sweet potato, with skin on, in enough cold water to cover and bring to a boil in medium saucepan. Cook about 15 minutes. When potato is soft but not mushy, remove from heat and drain water.

2. Place sweet potato in food processor. Process until smooth (about 2 minutes). Slowly add milk and process until thoroughly combined. Stir in cranberries and salt. Serve warm.

SALAD

2 cups mixed greens

½ cup chopped tomato

2 Tb. fat-free dressing or balsamic vinegar

PAPAYA, PINEAPPLE, AND RAISIN MEDLEY

1 cup papaya, cut into ½-inch chunks

1 cup fresh pineapple chunks or canned (in natural juice or light syrup)

2 Tb. raisins

2 Tb. lime juice

In small bowl, mix together papaya, pineapple, raisins, and lime juice. Serve chilled.

Per serving, 616 calories; 22% (34 g) protein, 10% (7 g) fat, 68% (109 g) carbohydrate. 72 mg cholesterol; 1,109 mg sodium. □