



Reflect, Replace & Reinforce Challenge



CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION:

Welcome to the "Reflect, Replace & Reinforce" Health Challenge! This transformative journey invites you to take a closer look at your eating habits, identify areas for improvement, and make meaningful changes. By reflecting on your current choices, replacing unhealthy options with nutritious alternatives, and reinforcing these positive habits, you'll set the foundation for a healthier, more vibrant lifestyle. This 4-week challenge is designed to help you build sustainable, healthy habits that will have a lasting impact on your overall wellbeing.

WHY DOES YOUR DIET MATTER?

It will come as no surprise, that the food you eat everyday has a large impact on your overall health. Eating nutritious foods provides your body with the energy it needs to support heart health, brain health, immune system functioning, and so much more. Think of food as the most important medicine you take every day. By making healthy food choices, you give your body the best chance to function at its best.

Information on diet and healthy eating is everywhere. We are often bombarded with headlines surrounding what we 'should' or 'should not' be eating. The research on diet is very conflicting, and while many claim to have found the answer, there are only a few diet-related health changes that are backed by science. Ultimately, what you eat, and how often you eat it, is not one size fits all. That's why making changes to your diet requires purposeful reflection and personalized decision making. There are some important changes to stick by and others that may or may not work for your body.

This challenge will help you begin your journey to a healthier diet in simple, easy steps, all back by research. The changes encouraged in this challenge are a great first step towards understanding how to fill your plate with the best fuel for your body.

THE CHALLENGE

Over the next 4 weeks, you will have a different challenge each week that ask you to adopt and reinforce new healthy eating habits to take forward with you in the future. Follow the steps for each week and get ready to embrace this journey and take the first step towards a healthier you!

REFLECT, REPLACE & REINFORCE

WEEK 1: REFLECT

The first step in the Reflect, Replace & Reinforce: Healthy Eating Challenge is to reflect on your current eating habits. To do this, you'll keep a food diary for one week. This will help you become more aware of what you're eating, when you're eating, and how your food choices make you feel. Here's how to get started:

How to Keep a Food Diary

- **Record Everything:** Write down everything you eat and drink throughout the day. Be honest and detailed, including portion sizes and any condiments or extras.
- **Note the Time:** Record the time of each meal or snack. This will help you identify patterns in your eating habits.
- **Include Your Feelings:** Make a note of how you feel before and after eating. Are you hungry, stressed, bored, or happy? This can help you understand emotional eating triggers.
- **Reflect Daily:** At the end of each day, take a few minutes to review your food diary and reflect on your choices.

Food Diary Example

Day	Time	Food/Drink Consumed	Portion Size	Feelings Before	Feelings After
Monday	7:30	Bowl of oatmeal with berries	1 cup	Hungry	Satisfied
	12:00	Turkey sandwich with veggies	1 sandwich	Normal	Energized
	3:00	Chips	1 small bag	Bored	Guilty
	6:30	Grilled chicken and quinoa salad	1 plate	Hungry	Full
	9:00	Ice cream	1 scoop	Craving sweets	Happy

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Reflective Questions

At the end of week 1, use the following questions in addition to your food diary to reflect on your eating habits and identify areas you would like to try and improve.

1. What patterns do you notice in your eating habits?

- Are there specific times when you tend to eat more?
- Do you skip meals or snack frequently?

2. How do your food choices correlate with your emotions?

- Are you eating certain foods when you're stressed or bored?
- Do some foods make you feel better or worse after eating them?

3. Are there any foods you consume regularly that are less nutritious?

- How often are you eating processed or sugary foods?
- Are there healthier alternatives you could consider?

4. How does your current diet make you feel overall?

- Do you feel energized or sluggish?
- Are there times when you feel particularly good or bad after eating?

By keeping a food diary and reflecting on these questions, you'll gain valuable insights into your eating habits and be better prepared to make healthier choices in the next steps of the challenge.

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WEEK 2: REPLACE

Welcome to Week 2 of your Reflect, Replace & Reinforce: Healthy Eating Challenge! This week is all about building on the insights you generated during last week's reflection period. To kick off the week, take a look at your food diary and reflective questions and **select 2 goals** from the list below to work towards over the next 3-weeks of the challenge.

Each of these goals are 'SMART' (Setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to help you make meaningful, lasting changes to your diet.

1. Increase Fruits & Vegetable Intake

- **Specific:** Eat more fruits & vegetables.
- **Measurable:** Include at least one serving of vegetables or fruit in each meal.
- **Achievable:** Plan and prepare meals that incorporate fruits & vegetables.
- **Relevant:** Improving overall diet and nutrient intake.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this change over the next 3 weeks.

2. Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption

- **Specific:** Cut down on sugary drinks.
- **Measurable:** Limit to one sugary drink per week.
- **Achievable:** Replace sugary drinks with water or herbal tea.
- **Relevant:** Decrease sugar intake to improve health.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this change over the next 3 weeks.

3. Increase Water Intake

- **Specific:** Drink more water.
- **Measurable:** Drink at least 8 cups of water daily
- **Achievable:** Carry a water bottle and set reminders.
- **Relevant:** Stay hydrated and improve overall health.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this change over the next 3 weeks.

4. Healthy Snacking

- **Specific:** Choose healthier snacks.
- **Measurable:** Replace chips and cookies with fruits or nuts at least 5 times per week.
- **Achievable:** Stock up on healthy snacks and prepare in advance.
- **Relevant:** Reduce junk food consumption and improve nutrient intake.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this change over the next 3 weeks.

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5. Balanced Breakfast

- **Specific:** Eat a balanced breakfast.
- **Measurable:** Include protein, healthy fats, and whole grains in breakfast 5 days a week.
- **Achievable:** Plan and prepare breakfasts in advance.
- **Relevant:** Start the day with sustained energy and improved focus.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this change over the next 3 weeks.

Once you have selected your goals, its time to start building those healthy habits! For this week focus on your first goal and in Week 3 focus on your second goal. Based on the goal you choose, select a set of challenges from the "Healthy Eats List"

This week's goal is _____

WEEK 3: REPLACE

Welcome to Week 3 of your Reflect, Replace & Reinforce: Healthy Eating Challenge! This week, focus on the second goal you selected last week and choose a different set of challenges from the 'Healthy Eats list'.

This week's goal is _____

WEEK 4: REINFORCE

This week is all about reinforcing your new habits. While you continue working towards your goals, it's important to dive a little deeper into the 'why' behind the healthy changes you are making. Sometimes knowing something is good for us is often not enough. To really reinforce healthy habits, you usually need to know more about why the change is important or even necessary – this is the difference between changing your diet and changing your lifestyle.

If you want to work towards a healthier lifestyle, take some time to think about why these changes matter to you and how they will impact your health. A summary of the science behind each goal on the "Healthy Eats List" is outlined below:

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Increase Fruits & Vegetable Intake

Eating fruits and vegetables is crucial for maintaining overall health. They are rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which support bodily functions and help prevent various diseases. Research shows that a diet high in fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, and type 2 diabetes.

These foods are also beneficial for maintaining a healthy weight, as they are low in calories and high in fiber, which helps you feel full longer. Fiber aids in digestion and can help prevent constipation. Additionally, the wide range of nutrients found in different colored fruits and vegetables ensures that your body gets a variety of compounds necessary for optimal health.

Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption

Reducing the consumption of sugary drinks is important for overall health. Sugary drinks, like sodas, fruit juices, and energy drinks, are high in added sugars and provide little to no nutritional value. Research shows that regularly consuming these beverages can lead to **several health issues**.

One major concern is weight gain. Sugary drinks are high in calories and consuming them regularly can contribute to obesity. Obesity, in turn, increases the risk of developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

Consuming too much sugar can also cause blood sugar spikes and crashes, leading to feelings of fatigue and irritability. Over time, this can affect your body's ability to regulate blood sugar levels, increasing the risk of insulin resistance and diabetes.

Increase Water Intake

Increasing your water consumption is essential for maintaining good health. Water is vital for many bodily functions, including regulating temperature, transporting nutrients, and removing waste. Research shows that staying well-hydrated has **numerous health benefits**.

One of the primary advantages of drinking more water is improved physical performance. When you're properly hydrated, your muscles and joints work better, reducing the risk of cramps and injuries. Additionally, staying hydrated helps maintain energy levels and improves concentration and cognitive function.

Water also plays a crucial role in digestion. It helps break down food so your body can absorb nutrients, and it prevents constipation by keeping the digestive system running smoothly. Drinking enough water can also aid in weight management. Sometimes, thirst is mistaken for hunger, leading to overeating. Drinking water can help control appetite and support a healthy metabolism.

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Healthy Snacking

Healthy snacking plays a significant role in maintaining overall health. Choosing nutritious snacks can provide essential nutrients, help manage hunger, and support a balanced diet. Research highlights several **benefits of healthy snacking**.

Eating nutrient-rich snacks like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains can prevent the spikes and crashes in blood sugar that are common with sugary or processed snacks. This helps maintain consistent energy levels throughout the day and reduces feelings of fatigue.

Healthy snacking also supports cognitive function. Nutrient-dense snacks provide the brain with a steady supply of glucose, which is essential for maintaining focus and concentration. Additionally, snacks rich in antioxidants, like berries and nuts, can protect brain cells from damage and improve mental clarity.

Healthy snacks also contribute to overall nutrient intake. Many people struggle to get all the vitamins and minerals they need from meals alone. Snacking on a variety of nutrient-dense foods can help fill in nutritional gaps and ensure a well-rounded diet.

Balanced Breakfast

Eating a balanced breakfast is crucial for maintaining overall health. Research shows that starting your day with a nutritious meal provides numerous benefits. Eating in the morning kickstarts your metabolism, helping your body burn calories more efficiently throughout the day. This can support weight management and reduce the risk of obesity.

Breakfast also provides essential nutrients that might be missed later in the day. A well-rounded breakfast that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins ensures a good intake of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. This contributes to overall nutritional balance and supports long-term health.

Some research has suggested that skipping breakfast has been linked to an increased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Regularly consuming a balanced breakfast can reduce these risks by promoting better eating habits and overall health.

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HEALTHY EATS LIST

Increase Fruits & Vegetable Intake

- **Challenge 1:** Give them a try - Try one new vegetable or fruit that you previously didn't like or haven't tried before.
- **Challenge 2:** Snack attack - Have a fruit or vegetable as a snack.
- **Challenge 3:** Boost your better breakfast - Add fruit or vegetables to your breakfast.
- **Challenge 4:** Elevate your plate - Fill half of your plate with vegetables at lunch and dinner.

Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption

- **Challenge 1:** Choose water - Carry a refillable water bottle to encourage you to drink water over other sugary drinks.
- **Challenge 2:** Choose sparkling - When you are craving a sugar pop, try unsweetened sparkling water instead.
- **Challenge 3:** Embrace the sweetness of fruit - Use sliced fruit or berries to add some natural sweetness to your water.
- **Challenge 4:** Make a smoothie - Blend up frozen fruit, yogurt and milk to make a sweet healthy option that avoids added sugar.

Increase Water Intake

- **Challenge 1:** Love your water bottle - Keep a reusable water bottle with you on your desk or in the car to encourage easy hydration.
- **Challenge 2:** Tie it to a routine - Tie your water consumption to other parts of your daily routine – drink a glass when you wake up, after brushing your teeth or with every meal.
- **Challenge 3:** Add flavour - Use lemons, limes, ginger or fruit to your water to add some tasty flavour.
- **Challenge 4:** Make festive ice cubes - Put fruit into your ice tray to make exciting ice cubes that spruce up your glass of water.

Healthy Snacking

- **Challenge 1:** Go nuts - Have a handful of nuts or homemade trail mix.
- **Challenge 2:** Focus on protein - Have a cheese string, hard-boiled egg, yogurt or some hummus for a high-protein snack.
- **Challenge 3:** Get fruity - Enjoy a piece of whole fruit like an apple, banana, or cup of berries.
- **Challenge 4:** Fill up on fibre - Have some veggies with hummus or a piece of whole grain toast with nut butter for a healthy filling snack!

Healthy Snacking

- **Challenge 1:** Eat dinner for breakfast - Breakfast can be non-traditional – try having a portion of last night's leftovers for breakfast.
- **Challenge 2:** Points for protein - Include a source of protein with your breakfast, like Greek yogurt, eggs, or a smoothie with added protein powder.
- **Challenge 3:** Add some colour to your plate - Fill your breakfast plate (or bowl) with a variety of fruits and veggies.
- **Challenge 4:** Meal prep for on the go - Prep some easy on-the-go options like yogurt and granola cups.



Congratulations on completing the **Reflect, Replace & Reinforce Challenge**

The journey of wellness is ongoing, and each step, no matter how small, is a victory to be celebrated. Keep pushing forward, embracing each day as an opportunity to live your best life.

