

Healthy Habits

from Prime of Life Fitness

Five Things I Learned from Keeping a Food Log

A food log is a tried and true technique for managing your weight. (Yes, I know: I'm the first to argue that the number on the scale is one of the least meaningful measures of your health or fitness, but that's a different story.) If your fitness goal is to lose weight, tracking everything you eat for a set period of time will give you insights into your eating habits that can lead to meaningful change.

When I start a new client on a food tracking process, I often join along so I can remember just what it's like to write down absolutely everything you eat. It's not easy, but the things you learn can change your habits and change your life for the better. Here are my top five lessons from keeping a food log:

1. It's easy to misjudge how much you're eating. How is it that a cup of green beans seems like so much, but a cup of ice cream seems like so little? Most of us are not very good judges of weights and volumes, so keeping a food log forces you to get out your kitchen scale and measuring cups to track your intake accurately.

2. Food packaging can be *really* deceiving. A pouch of two chicken breasts from Costco would seem like it should serve two people. But if each breast is 9.5 ounces (yes, I measured), then each pouch really contains almost 5 servings. Same with that single-serving chef salad you picked up at the Wal-Mart deli. You're going to eat the whole thing, but the package says it serves four.

3. It's really easy to go over my daily calorie target. Especially when alcohol, sweets, or a cranky mood come into play. That's the beauty of a food log, though. It teaches you what your weaknesses and your blind spots are so you can develop a strategy for staying out of trouble.

4. I get to eat a LOT, as long as I choose wisely.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1.5 Cups Salad with 1.5 Tbsp Dressing (100g)	
Servings per Container About 4.5	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 60
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 6g	9%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	3%
Sodium 410mg	17%
Total Carbohydrate 16g	3%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 25% • Vitamin C 20%	
Calcium 4% • Iron 2%	

I'm not big on being hungry. For me, one of the great benefits of a food log is that it helps me learn to build meals that fill me up without blowing a ton of calories. I learn all too graphically what they mean by "empty" calories.

5. A food log motivates me to exercise. It only takes a few days of tracking to realize that a brisk 30-minute walk can mean the difference between a day with no splurges allowed and a day that includes a guilt-free indulgence, like a glass of wine or a piece of chocolate. Seems like a fair trade to me.

Action Item: Are you in control of your eating, or is food controlling you? Use an online food tracker or just a notebook to log everything you eat for a week. Make note of what you learned about your food, your habits and your mood, and plan a strategy to tackle any issues you identified.

Need help figuring out how much you should be eating each day? Request a [free initial consultation](#) to get an estimate of your resting metabolic rate and daily calorie needs.



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P.O. Box 1561 Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

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