

# Home Food Environment Assessment



**This is a tool** that will help you assess your surroundings and learn how your environment can affect your eating habits. Use this tool to help you shape your current food environment and discover ways to make improvements in and around your home that will make it easier to eat healthier.

For maximum effectiveness, review the tips provided for each question. You will find new ideas on how to create and maintain a healthy home food environment.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. All questions are answered by choosing A, B, or C.
2. If you feel a question does not apply to you, do not record an answer. That question will not be counted toward your total score.
3. To score your assessment, total the number of As, Bs, and Cs you have answered.
4. Read the description that corresponds to your score and review the tips provided.

**1** THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 1 AND PAGE 2 ARE ANSWERED BY CHECKING THE APPROPRIATE FOODS IN COLUMNS A, B, OR C. PLEASE CHECK ITEMS THAT YOU TYPICALLY HAVE IN YOUR REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER.

Food Group	Column A	Column B	Column C
<b>FRUITS &amp; VEGETABLES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened frozen fruit <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh fruits/vegetables		<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit in heavy syrup <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables in high fat sauces
<b>MEAT &amp; PROTEIN</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lean meat (poultry, fish, tenderloin) <input type="checkbox"/> Egg substitutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium fat meat (ground beef, pork) <input type="checkbox"/> Whole eggs	<input type="checkbox"/> High fat meat (sausage, bacon, ribs)
<b>DAIRY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Non/low fat milk <input type="checkbox"/> Non/low fat cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat unsweetened yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Non/low fat sour cream	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole milk* <input type="checkbox"/> Full fat cheese* <input type="checkbox"/> Full fat yogurt* <input type="checkbox"/> 2% milk <input type="checkbox"/> Full fat sour cream* *See tips on page 6, questions 1 & 2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee creamers <input type="checkbox"/> Half & Half
<b>FATS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Avocado	<input type="checkbox"/> Light/trans fat free margarines	<input type="checkbox"/> Butter <input type="checkbox"/> Margarine
<b>SNACKS &amp; MEALS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low fat portion controlled frozen meals (e.g., Lean Cuisine)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorbet/fat reduced ice cream <input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt based ice creams <input type="checkbox"/> Popsicles	<input type="checkbox"/> High fat, high calorie frozen meals <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cream <input type="checkbox"/> Whipping cream <input type="checkbox"/> Full fat & sweetened frozen yogurt
<b>TOTALS</b>	_____ <b>A</b>	_____ <b>B</b>	_____ <b>C</b>

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**2** PLEASE CHECK THE ITEMS IN THE TABLE BELOW THAT YOU TYPICALLY HAVE IN YOUR PANTRY OR CUPBOARD.

Food Type	Column A	Column B	Column C
<b>GRAINS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole grain cereal bread/pasta <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rice <input type="checkbox"/> Corn tortillas	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened cereals <input type="checkbox"/> White bread <input type="checkbox"/> White noodles/pasta <input type="checkbox"/> White rice <input type="checkbox"/> Flour tortillas	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetened cereals <input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast pastries <input type="checkbox"/> Large muffins/bagels <input type="checkbox"/> Prepackaged pastas <input type="checkbox"/> Prepackaged rice <input type="checkbox"/> Doughnuts
<b>FRUITS &amp; VEGETABLES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened dried fruit <input type="checkbox"/> Canned fruit in juice <input type="checkbox"/> Low sodium vegetable juice <input type="checkbox"/> Canned vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable juice <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetened dried fruit <input type="checkbox"/> Dried vegetable slices	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned fruit in syrup <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable snack chips
<b>MEAT &amp; PROTEIN</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned tuna/salmon packed in water <input type="checkbox"/> Canned/dried beans	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned tuna/salmon packed in oil <input type="checkbox"/> Canned/dried beef/pork <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat bean dip <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat refried beans	<input type="checkbox"/> Beef jerky <input type="checkbox"/> Pork rinds <input type="checkbox"/> Full fat refried beans
<b>DAIRY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonfat powdered milk <input type="checkbox"/> Skim evaporated milk <input type="checkbox"/> Soy milk <input type="checkbox"/> Rice milk	<input type="checkbox"/> Powdered low fat/whole milk* *See tips on page 6, questions 1 & 2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Condensed milk <input type="checkbox"/> Evaporated milk (regular)
<b>FATS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Olive oil <input type="checkbox"/> Canola oil <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut oil <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking spray	<input type="checkbox"/> Soybean oil <input type="checkbox"/> Corn oil <input type="checkbox"/> Safflower oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Lard <input type="checkbox"/> Shortening <input type="checkbox"/> Coconut oil
<b>BEVERAGES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> 100% fruit juice	<input type="checkbox"/> Diet soda <input type="checkbox"/> Sports drinks <input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened tea <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee	<input type="checkbox"/> Soda <input type="checkbox"/> Kool Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit punch <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetened tea
<b>SNACKS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole grain crackers <input type="checkbox"/> Dried fruits <input type="checkbox"/> Unsalted nuts/seeds <input type="checkbox"/> Rice cakes <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat microwave popcorn	<input type="checkbox"/> Salted nuts/seeds <input type="checkbox"/> Crackers <input type="checkbox"/> Protein bars <input type="checkbox"/> Pretzels	<input type="checkbox"/> Potato chips, candy bars <input type="checkbox"/> Granola bars (high fat/high sugar) <input type="checkbox"/> Fruity snacks <input type="checkbox"/> Buttered/kettle popcorn <input type="checkbox"/> Cookies
<b>CONDIMENTS &amp; PRESERVES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Spices/pepper <input type="checkbox"/> Lime/lemon juice <input type="checkbox"/> Fish sauce <input type="checkbox"/> Mustard <input type="checkbox"/> Salsa	<input type="checkbox"/> Low fat/vinaigrette salad dressings <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat sauces <input type="checkbox"/> Ketchup <input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened nut butters (e.g., peanut butter) <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar free jam/jelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Mayonnaise <input type="checkbox"/> Creamy salad dressings <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate syrup <input type="checkbox"/> Pancake syrup
<b>TOTAL'S</b>	_____ <b>A</b>	_____ <b>B</b>	_____ <b>C</b>

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**3** WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE PACKAGING AND PORTION SIZES OF THE FOODS YOU HAVE IN YOUR HOME? MOST SNACKS AND HIGHER CALORIE FOODS ARE IN:

- \_\_\_ **A** Individual or single serving/small packages (e.g., single serving potato chips/pretzels, two cookies to a package, single ice cream bars, 1 ounce packages of nuts, single servings of frozen entrees, mini candy bars, etc.)
- \_\_\_ **B** Regular size package (e.g., pints of ice cream, 12 ounce bags of chips, whole pies, blocks of cheese, bags of candy, etc.)
- \_\_\_ **C** Bulk or family size packages for many items (e.g., extra large cookies.)

PLEASE ADD YOUR TOTALS FOR #1 & #2 AND YOUR ANSWER FOR #3 TO THE CHART BELOW.  
 PLEASE CHECK THE COLUMN THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR FAMILY CHOICES FOR QUESTIONS 4-17.

Question (Questions 1-3 are from previous tables).	A=Always	B=Sometimes	C=Never
1 Items most found in your pantry or cupboard.			
2 Items most found in your refrigerator or freezer.			
3 Packaging and portion sizes of the foods you have in your home.			
4 Are your nutritious foods, such as dried fruits and nuts, easier to access than less nutritious foods such as cookies, crackers, and cakes? For example, do you keep healthier foods stored in front of unhealthier foods in the refrigerator or pantry?			
5 Do you keep fruits and vegetables prepared (washed and cut) so they are ready to eat? For example, are fruits and vegetables washed and on the countertop (if appropriate) rather than unwashed and in a refrigerator drawer?			

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Question	A=Always	B=Sometimes	C=Never
6 Do you and your family have mealtimes away from a television where it is easier to pay attention to what and how much you are eating?			
7 Do you control the portion size of your meals by serving individual plates from the kitchen rather than having large quantities of food readily accessible on the table?			
8 Do you control your portion size of food when snacking? For example, do you put a small amount of potato chips in a bowl rather than eat straight from the package?			
9 What size plates does your family typically use for meals?	Salad Plate 7-9 in.	Average Plate 10-12 in.	Large Plate 13 in.
10 What size drinking glass does your family typically use for meals?	4-6 oz.	7-8 oz.	9+ oz.
11 Do you use nonstick pans and cooking sprays rather than oils and other fats to cook your meals?			
12 Do you use a kitchen scale, measuring cups or spoons so that you are better aware of portion sizes?			
13 Do you use your garden or a shared/community garden to grow fruits and vegetables?			
14 Do you shop at a supermarket or farmers market where plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables are available rather than a convenience store where these items may be limited?			
15 Do you make a list prior to going to the grocery store so that you are less likely to purchase unnecessary items?			

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Question	A=Always	B=Sometimes	C=Never
16 Do you utilize free membership benefits at your local supermarket so you can purchase healthier food at more affordable prices?			
17 Do you prepare more meals than you purchase? For example, do you cook at home more times a week than you buy pre-packaged, takeout or restaurant meals?			
<b>TOTALS FOR QUESTIONS 1-17</b>	_____ A	_____ B	_____ C

**SCORING FOR QUESTIONS 1-17:**

**IF YOU CHOSE MOSTLY As**



Congratulations! The food in your kitchen and your physical environment support a healthy lifestyle. However, there is always room for improvement. Check your answers and the tips below to see if there are any areas you may benefit from working on.

**IF YOU CHOSE MOSTLY Bs**



You are on the right track to creating a healthy home food environment. Continue to look for ways to increase your inventory of healthy foods and establish a healthy physical environment around your home. Check your answers and the tips below to see where you can improve.

**IF YOU CHOSE MOSTLY Cs**



There is room for improvement when it comes to your home food environment. There may be some foods in your kitchen that do not support a healthy lifestyle or you may have a physical environment that is not conducive to healthy eating. Try to substitute healthier foods for the less nutritious foods in your diet. Read the tips on the next pages to discover ways to make the environment around your home one that supports healthier eating habits.

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## TIPS

### QUESTION 1 AND 2:

A healthy home food environment starts with what you purchase at the grocery store. A pantry, refrigerator, and freezer stocked with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and low fat dairy promote healthy eating. In questions 1 and 2 we have grouped foods together that are similar in nutritional value.

**COLUMN A** contains foods that are low in fat and high in fiber and other nutrients, therefore making them the healthiest choices.

**COLUMN B** contains foods that are somewhat low in fat and are suitable choices, but often not the healthiest option available.

\*Please note that whole milk, full fat cheese and yogurt (as listed in Column B) should be given to children under 2 years of age.

**COLUMN C** contains foods that are high in fat and/or sugar. Foods in this column should only be purchased and consumed occasionally. If you are purchasing candy bars, potato chips, and other items in Column C, look for fun-size or smaller portions. You can also look for brands that provide low fat or light versions of your favorite items.

### QUESTION 3:

Portion control is a good way to avoid overeating. Try and stock your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer with single serving portions. If it is more practical to buy foods in bulk, find a way to split large quantities into individual serving sizes to avoid overeating at snack and meal times.

### QUESTIONS 4 AND 5:

The way you store food can influence your eating patterns. Store healthy foods in places that are easy to reach. For example, cut melons and store them in a container near the front of the refrigerator for easy access. Pre-wash other fruits and vegetables and store these and other nutritious foods within reach on a counter or at eye level in the pantry, refrigerator, or freezer. Placing items of less nutritional value in an inaccessible location will limit unnecessary snacking.

### QUESTION 6:

Meal and snack times should nourish your body. It is difficult to be aware of what you are eating when you are distracted. Eating meals on the go or in front of the television may lead to overeating without realizing it. Try eating meals and snacks without the television on so that you are more aware of your food intake and perhaps enjoy the taste as well.

### QUESTION 7 AND 8:

People often overeat/over drink when there is abundant food and beverage within easy reach. When sitting down to a meal or when having a snack, serve plates, bowls, or cups from the kitchen rather than setting large quantities of food/beverage on the table where second portions are easily accessible.

### QUESTION 9 AND 10:

Filling a large plate with food may encourage you to eat larger portion sizes. Avoid excessive portion sizes by using plates that are 7 to 9 inches in diameter and remember that it is not necessary to fill your plate or finish every bite. The same is true for glassware. While water should be consumed in larger amounts, sweetened beverages such as juice should be consumed in moderation. Drink these beverages from 4 to 6 ounce glasses. Also, remember that alcoholic beverages can contribute a significant number of calories to your diet.

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## QUESTION 11 AND 12:

A kitchen with cooking equipment such as nonstick pans, cooking spray, and measuring spoons/cups will help achieve healthy cooking and portion control. Nonstick pans and cooking sprays can help avoid adding unnecessary fats to your meal. Using measuring spoons/cups will control your portion sizes. Try to stock items such as flour, spices, low fat broth, and other common cooking and baking ingredients so that meal preparation can be quick and easy.

## QUESTION 13 AND 14:

If possible, use yard space to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. You may also be able to utilize a local farmers' market for affordable fresh produce. Try to avoid grocery shopping at a convenience store, where these items are limited.

## QUESTION 15:

Making a grocery list prior to shopping will limit impulse buying. Make sure your list contains plenty of items listed in Column A (See pages 1 and 2) and you will be on your way to establishing a healthy home food environment.

## QUESTION 16:

Healthy foods can be affordable. Take advantage of free membership benefits at your local supermarket. With a membership, you can often purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy items at a reasonable price.

## QUESTION 17:

Eating meals out makes it difficult to accommodate a healthy diet because you have less control over what goes into your meal. Try limiting your meals out to 2 or 3 times a week and make prepackaged or take out meals more nutritious by adding extra fruits and vegetables.

