



Things you may want to add to your health defaults;

Avoid inflammatory foods:

Sugar, vegetable oil, fried foods, refined flour, artificial sweeteners, saturated fats, gluten, alcohol, trans-fats, fast foods.

Explore possible diets to help identify healthy foods.⁶

- Mediterranean diet
- Paleolithic diet
- McDougall diet
- Gluten Free diet
- Swank diet

Talk with your doctor to find a healthy balance with these diets

Avoid deficiencies of essential nutrients. Test your levels to ensure you are in recommended levels.

References

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3. Zepeda L, Deal D. Think before you eat: photographic food diaries as intervention tools to change dietary decision making and attitudes. *Int J Consum Stud*. 2008;32:692-698.
4. Kemper KJ. Chronic disease? Healthy habits in a healthy habitat—research on dietary therapies. *Complement Ther Med*. 2017;35:A2.
5. Cohen DA. Obesity and the built environment: changes in environmental cues cause energy imbalances. *Int J Obes (Lond)*. 2008;32(07):137-142.
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Food for thought:

Have you noticed that some restaurants are starting to offer healthier sides. Or that children's meals come with fruit instead of French fries? These are examples of health defaults. What is offered is healthy, that doesn't mean someone can't order French fries but it is not the default option.

Can you think of other ways you can reset your health defaults to improve your quality of life?

Below are some websites that can help navigate the world of nutrition and give you ideas of healthy ideas and changes you can make.

- <https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Living-Well-With-MS/Diet-Exercise-Healthy-Behaviors/Diet-Nutrition>
- <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/>
- <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/healthy-eating-plate>



Resetting Healthy Defaults

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE WITH MS.



Health Defaults

This is the idea that people will follow the status quo and default habits even if they know there are better options. They will follow the path of least resistance.¹ So by setting healthy defaults they are setting themselves up to be healthier.

You have been diagnosed with MS. There is nothing to be done about that now, yet! But something you can do is try and live a lifestyle that promotes the best health. By ensuring your default settings are as healthy as possible.

In America today the default lifestyle is unhealthy!¹

This lifestyle has three components: exchanging human energy with mechanical energy, displacing home cooking with commercialized food products, and substituting health maintenance with medical dependency.²

It is key to reset these defaults by recognizing the risks and resetting your defaults. It means taking an active role in your life to ensure you are making the best decisions for your body.

This can be challenging on the best of days, adding the challenges of MS can make it seem impossible at times. This is where making changings in your life to ensure healthy behaviors are more convenient comes into play.¹

Start by looking around your home.

Remove unhealthy food options. This will make it that much easier to make better choices.

As you are aware, eating fruit is better for you than eating cookies. By removing the cookies from your pantry you can make it that much easier to avoid temptation.

Think before you eat! Surround yourself with healthy options so you do not have to think as hard.

For many people the issue is they do not make the personal connection between their knowledge and their behavior.³ They know what is unhealthy but they do not connect that with their own actions.

Some simple actions you can start today:

- Meal plan vs impulse buying
- Bring food with you to avoid making poor discussions.
- Eat fresh foods vs processed foods
- Make sure you getting the right nutrients
- Add supplements to your daily routine
- Be conscious of portion sizes
- Eat the rainbow, try fruits and vegetables of all different colors
- Make sure your hunger is real not artificially stimulated by images of foods⁴

⁴Did you know that when you see images of food it can actually cause your brain to secrete dopamine causing cravings.⁴

Beyond diet; areas to focus on:⁵

Managing Stress

This is especially important for you. Stress and MS do not go well together. Try Meditation, yoga, or tai-chi.

Optimizing Sleep

Fatigue is real issues, make sure you are getting enough quality sleep to reduce negative consequences.

Social Support

It is a lot easier to eat better when those around you are eating healthy too! Try getting those in your home on the right track as well.

It is also important to have good social support to help avoid depression. It can also be helpful to talk about what is going on with your MS with people who can understand your situation.

Energetic Exercise

Exercise can be tricky. Find something that works for you. Strength training a couple of times a week is a good plan. Try and do 30-60 minutes of cardio everyday.

It is important to keep as much strength in your muscles as you can for as long as you can. Depending on your level of ability and disability this will be different for everyone. But there are small steps, pun intended that can be taken. If you are able to walk unhindered, try parking farther away or taking the stairs when possible. For those who are hindered more, try water-based exercises. The coolness of the water helping to keep core temperature lower longer. Resistances bands or weights can also be a great form of exercise.