Speaker 1:

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program, keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap:

Many of us would like to eat healthier and shed some pounds. But making those things happen can prove to be a huge challenge – even when we're motivated by a New Year's resolution. I'm Emily Yeap. Natalie Allen, registered dietitian and clinical assistant professor of biomedical sciences at Missouri State University, is my guest today. She's here to offer some tips and advice on how you can succeed at eating healthier in the New Year.

Natalie Allen:

First of all, be realistic. Don't try to make a lot of changes, make one or two. So realistically, what's something that you could do every day that would help your diet? It might be drink more water, or it could be I'm going to have a fruit or vegetable as my snack, instead of something not as healthy. Pick something that's realistic and doable, and then I would change maybe one to two things.

Instead of being overwhelmed and saying, "I'm going to change my entire diet," let's not start that big. Start with a couple things and then once you've done those for a month or so, and they're natural and they're a habit, then you can pick two or three more to work on in the spring.

Emily Yeap:

To make a sustainable change, the key is to improve on an area that's not going to take a lot of time or effort.

Natalie Allen:

Let's say you want to make your breakfast better. You don't eat breakfast or you just drink coffee. You can still have the coffee but maybe you add a piece of fruit to that or you add a trail mix that would have some healthy nuts in there. Again, realistic and simple.

Emily Yeap:

Allen highlights a few areas of improvement for folks in general.

Natalie Allen:

I think a lot of places that people need to make improvements are their breakfast. We also chronically are not always very well hydrated. How could you add more water? And one easy way to do that is get a cup that's so many ounces and then say, "Okay in a day, I need to drink three of these full of water" in addition to whatever else you drink. Or your goal might be, "I'm always hungry right when I get home from work and I overeat when I get home because dinner is not ready." So you have a couple choices there. Maybe your option is you say, "All right, I'm going to get an apple or something healthy and I'm going to eat that on my way home. So then when I get home, I'm not famished and eating the whole bag of cookies."

Or another thing you could do is prep your meal in the morning before you go to work. So then when you get home, either you put it in the crock pot and it's almost ready, or your veggies are chopped, you can make a quick stir fry because most people, the time they overeat is right when they get home or before they go to bed.

Emily Yeap:

What are some simple things you can do to make your snacks healthier and more nutritious?

Natalie Allen:

So let's say your snack is crackers and crackers aren't necessarily bad but look at your cracker. Does it have fiber? Does it have whole grains? And then could you pair it with a protein because the protein is going to help you feel full and it's also going to be good for your muscles. So, could you eat peanut butter and crackers or hummus and crackers? That ups the nutritional value, bam, but you don't have to do very much work.

Another easy thing that you could look at is, do you eat something in the afternoon that's crunchy and salty? Let's say you like pretzels. Could you mix your pretzel sticks with maybe some almonds and salted peanuts and then put some dried fruit in there? Make a little trail mix. You still gets your pretzels but you have other things that are adding more nutritional value in your trail mix, plus it's going to fill you up more and stick with you longer.

If you're more of a sweet tooth person and your snack is chocolate in the afternoon and that's okay, but look at how much are you eating? And also do you like dark chocolate? That's always a little bit better for you. And again, could you pair it with something? I had a person that I just saw and she had a great snack choice, I thought. She took chocolate graham crackers and she put almond butter on them and then she sprinkled many chocolate chips in the peanut butter.

So it was a good chocolate fix, but it also gave her the protein from the almond butter. It filled her up and then she also felt like, "Okay, this is my one snack and now I'm done" versus when you have a bag of chocolate, you just keep eating a little bit each time. Make your snack more substantial and then that's all you eat.

Emily Yeap:

That was Natalie Allen, registered dietictan and clinical assistant professor of biomedical sciences at Missouri State. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

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