

FIGURING OUT... FOOD DIARIES



A food diary is more than just a tool for calorie counting. It allows you to keep track of what you eat, when you eat, and how the food you put in your body makes you feel. By identifying your eating habits and patterns, you become more aware about both your good and not-so-good food choices, which ultimately helps you make the best decisions for you.

Here are just some of the benefits of keeping a food diary:

It keeps you accountable

When you commit to recording everything you eat and drink, you may find yourself second-guessing your choice to have dessert instead of an extra serving of vegetables at dinner. So, your food diary may help you stay true to your healthy eating goals.

It can help you lose weight

Research supports the importance of food tracking for weight management. Daily recording of how you fuel your body can help you and your doctor manage where your calories are coming from, and make any adjustments required to help you reach your goal.

It can help identify food sensitivities

Unwanted digestive symptoms could be a sign of food intolerances. That's why it's also helpful to write down how you feel physically after you eat. By noting any symptoms like stomach pain, bloating, brain fog, or rashes, you and your doctor can use your food diary to detect potential intolerances or allergies to certain foods.

It can help pinpoint emotional triggers

Our emotions affect our eating habits. For example, feeling tired, sad or angry can often lead to us eating even when we're not hungry. Taking note of how you feel (both physically and emotionally) before and after you eat can reveal circumstances that trigger you to eat when you're not hungry.



So, how do you get started?

Firstly, find a method that works for you. If it works, it's more likely to stick. Some people prefer to write it down in a paper diary, some input it on a "Notes" app on their phone and others like to use a food tracking app. There is no right answer!



What should you include in your diary?

At a minimum:

- › What you are eating – the specific food/beverages you are consuming. Include how it's cooked (e.g., boiled, fried, baked).
- › How much of it you are eating – try to measure with weight scales, or by household measurements (e.g., cups, teaspoons, tablespoons).
- › What time you are eating.

To maximize the benefits:

- › Where and who you are eating with – is this at the dinner table with people, in the car alone, or walking to work?
- › If you are doing anything else while eating – e.g., watching TV, on the phone or computer.
- › What your physical hunger levels are before and after eating.
- › How you felt emotionally before, during and after your meal.

Tips for successful food journaling

Track as you go

Complete your diary meal by meal. Don't wait until the end of the day because your recollection is likely to be less accurate.

Be specific

For example, if you are drinking a latte, note the size and type of milk. Remember beverages (including alcohol) should also be recorded in your diary.

Review your diary

Don't just complete your diary and forget about it. Step back and look at what you've recorded. Search for any trends, patterns, or habits.

You can talk more about food diaries at your next ZUPREME Trial visit.

