

Teens and Healthy Eating: What Gets in Your Way?

What's the hardest thing about eating healthier?

It has to be hanging out at my friends' houses.

We eat a lot of chips, pizza, sodas ...and I guess that's okay for them because they don't have a weight problem. I do better at home, but when I'm with my friends ...well, I like all that stuff ... and it's tough to say no.

Home is definitely hardest for me. My mom acts hurt if I don't want to eat the food she made, like I'm rejecting her personally. I guess it's partly a culture thing. We eat very traditional meals, and my mom still makes things the way her mother did, with lots of fat.

Recently she made something I used to like, and I didn't take any. She just blew up!

She's like 'I work all day, then I come home and cook, and you don't appreciate it! Why do you think you're better than the rest of us?' And I'm like, 'Mom, it's not about that. I'm just trying to eat healthier!'

How do you deal with the things that make it hard to eat better?

'Things'? Oh, you mean my mom.' Well, I had an idea after that last big blowup. I waited 'til the next day. Then I told her she works so hard, maybe I could help her out. I could make dinner a couple of nights a week. After she got over the shock, she said yeah, that would be all right.

I told my mom that snacking with my friends was my weakness, and she said, 'You could take your own snacks, like carrot sticks or popcorn.' Right ... like I want to seem strange. No.

I read somewhere that change works best if you do it in small steps ...so I started watching my serving sizes. I used to gobble up half a pizza. Now I have one slice, and I eat it slower. If it's chips, I sneak a look at the serving size on the bag. If a serving is 10 chips, that's how many I eat. I quit drinking sodas too.

How's it going for you?

It's good ... It felt like a big deal to me, but none of the guys really paid any attention. I'm not perfect ... sometimes I slip up and have more. But I'm definitely eating a lot less junk food.

I made two meals last week. I got online and found recipes for things we like that have less fat in them. They turned out ... pretty good. My sister liked them. My mom ... Well, she was nice about it. And she's glad to get a break from the kitchen.

Got any advice for other kids?

Maybe, if you want to eat better, do it. I think my mom respects me more because I didn't just complain. I did something about it.

You don't have to give up everything you like. Just don't overdo it. And don't assume your friends will give you a hard time if you change. The only thing my friends noticed is that I've lost some weight!