9 Reading

Before Reading

1. Write down what you think are the main ingredients that attract people to junk food. Share your answers with the class.
2. List the factors that normally lead people to become addicted to junk food. Share your answers in groups.

Good eating habits contribute to health and fitness and make you feel strong. "What is so good about a diet of vegetables and fruit combined with lean meat, preferably chicken or fish?", you might ask. If you are very tired, hungry, and upset there is nothing better than a juicy beef burger with fries or a giant pizza, you think. That's probably true if your brain has gotten used to the pleasure felt when tasting junk food. But is it good for you? Does it help you stay fit and control your weight? How do you feel after you've had a meal? Are you sure it's not time to break the habit?

Breaking the habit—Getting healthy

The following is a checklist to help you decide if it's time for you or a friend to change eating habits. Just ONE "warning sign" should be enough reason to take action.

- ✔ You shouldn't think 'junk food' the minute you start feeling hungry. There never is an acceptable reason for this. It is a definite sign of a habit that is on the way to becoming an addiction.
- ✔ Comfort eating is usually associated with junk food and in general, high calorie food that is also high in carbohydrates [starch and sugar] and saturated fat. If you run to the nearest fast food chain every time you feel down, you know it is out of control.
- ✔ A healthy, nutritious meal does not have to be bland and boring. When pushed you can picture appetizing dishes that do not contain fries or fatty ingredients but you still prefer to get hold of a beef burger or a pizza. You know it's not the best food for you. You know that you are going to feel sleepy and tired after you have eaten.
- ✔ To be honest, healthy is a relative term. It all depends on what your alternatives are. There are 'healthier' choices you can make even at a fast food restaurant. You might, for example, order salad as a side dish instead of a second helping of fries. You could avoid condiments such as ketchup or mayonnaise, or eat a chicken burger. You know all this, you have promised yourself to do it next time you are there, but somehow it never happens. You keep on insisting that those dishes take longer to prepare.

But breaking a habit can leave you feeling down. Don't worry, this is quite common; and it shouldn't last very long if you stick to your decision to give up junk food.

- You ought to decide on your own if it's best to cut down on the amount of junk food you eat, gradually over a period of time, or whether it's best to stop altogether for some time.
- You should allow yourself some time to do it successfully
- You shouldn't give up simply because you were with friends and joined them for dinner at a fast food restaurant, or because you helped yourself to a few fries.
- Pick up some menus from different restaurants and read them carefully, paying attention to the ingredients of each dish. Then highlight the dishes that you find interesting.
- You might go to the supermarket and wander around making a list of all the food and ingredients that you find attractive.
- If a friend insists on offering you junk food, turn down the offer and treat yourself to something nice. The important thing is to regain control and only eat junk food when nothing else is available or very occasionally for a change.
- Make a list of all the things you enjoy doing but had to give up because you gained weight or do not feel energetic enough. Decide what you would like to do again and when. Set yourself goals that are achievable and enjoyable. Treat yourself right!



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After Reading

A. Answer ***true*** or ***false*** according to the information in the reading.

1. ___ Eating habits can probably affect the way one's brain operates.
2. ___ Associating hunger with fast food is a sign of addiction.
3. ___ Comfort eating is associated with healthy food.
4. ___ If you cannot stop eating junk food immediately, there is no hope of ever breaking the habit.

B. Complete the following sentences based on the reading.

1. Breaking your own rules occasionally should not make you _____.
2. If a friend insists on treating you to fast food _____.
3. You should decide if it's better for you to _____.
4. If you feel tired and drowsy after you eat, then you'd better _____.
5. Breaking a habit is difficult and makes you feel down; therefore you shouldn't _____.

Discussion

1. Do you think there are other reasons for giving up junk food?
2. Do you agree with the advice in the reading?
3. Have you ever tried to change your eating habits? Was it easy or difficult? Why?
4. What advice can you give someone who wants to change their eating habits or daily routine in order to get fit?



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