5 tips for creating healthy and satisfying meals

It's no fun to sit down to a healthy but bland meal that will leave you yearning for additional morsels when it's gone. Thankfully, there are tricks you can use to make nutritious meals that are both tasty and filling:

1 **Use the traditional two.** Filling half your plate with fruits and vegetable gives a meal staying power. Fruits and vegetables are packed with fiber. This fills you up and slows digestion, making you feel full for a longer period of time.

2 **Rotate protein.** Protein satisfies your hunger and keeps you feeling full. Healthy sources include chicken, eggs, nuts, beans, and fish. For variety, rotate protein choices throughout the week. Try going meatless for a day by using eggs and beans as your protein source.

3 **Enhance flavor.** Spice up vegetables and protein with a salt-free spice blend, or some oregano, cilantro, cumin, basil, or pepper. Give pizzazz to cauliflower, baby carrots, celery, and broccoli with hummus dip or a dip made with a low-fat yogurt base.

4 **Choose the right grains.** Whole grains also provide the benefits of fiber and don't cause your blood sugar to spike, as refined grains do. After you eat refined grains (found in muffins or a pastry, for example) your body creates insulin to take care of the rise in blood sugar. This is followed by a drop in blood sugar and a feeling of hunger. To make sure you're getting whole grains, check the food label for "100% whole grain" or "100% whole wheat."

5 **Sweeten it up.** To satisfy your sweet tooth, top off the meal with a fruit-based dessert, such as baked apples with cinnamon, a fresh fruit salad, or fruit topped with fat-free or low-fat yogurt. If chocolate's your thing, try a small piece of dark chocolate or chocolate pudding made with low-fat or skim milk. ♦

Key to remember: Eat slowly. Take time to enjoy your food, and give your body a chance to realize it's full before you take in too many calories.