

BLUE PRINTS

2008 VOL. 6, ISSUE 1

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2 Step into 2008

If past New Year's resolutions had you swearing you'd begin dieting or exercising, you've been doing a one-step when you could have been "Doing the 2."

We all know we should eat better. We also know exercise is the key to improving overall health. Put better eating habits and more movement together, and you are doing the 2 Step toward a great 2008!

The **Louisiana 2 Step** is Blue Cross' fun and free program that encourages Louisianians to make two small daily changes: *eat right* and *move more*. Your personal Louisiana 2 Step game plan can be as simple as you want it to be. You might decide to eat more fresh vegetables and go walking three evenings a week. You may take it to the next level by taking advantage of 2 Step partner Jenny Craig's discount offer and going a local gym. You might decide to simply cut out two of three weekly hamburgers and go dancing with friends.

What ever the case may be, with the Louisiana 2 Step you can tailor it to the "do-able," as well as to the "you-able." You can live up to your resolutions and reach the goals you set.

The cornerstone of the Louisiana 2 Step is an interactive website that offers suggestions, events, restaurants, menus, recipes and even a set of virtual "coaches" to cheer you on. Check out all of these great features and more at www.Louisiana2Step.com. Imagine how wonderful you will look and feel as 2008 draws to a close, and your healthy new lifestyle takes you 2 Stepping into 2009!

Simple Strategies for a 2-Step Year

- Make a commitment, however simple, to adjust your eating habits in favor of health.
(Suggestion: One simple change at a time.)
- Make a commitment to be less sedentary.
(Suggestion: Park a little farther away and walk a little more.)
- Consider switching to healthier versions of foods you like.
(Example: Oven-fried chicken instead of deep-fried.)
- Use healthier ingredients when cooking.
(Canadian bacon instead of the other kind.)
- Go to restaurants that accommodate healthier eating.
(Find 2 Step Participating Restaurants on the website.)
- Stop and take healthy, deep breaths.
- Sit up straight.
- Eat slowly so that your body can better digest what you eat.
- Get adequate rest and sleep.



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The Failure of Fast Food

Did you know that the average American eats three burgers and four orders of fries each week? That the typical American child gets one fourth of his veggies in the form of fries or chips? That Louisiana has an adult obesity rate of 28 percent, the fourth highest in the nation? Perhaps not coincidentally, Louisiana has twice the number of fast-food restaurants per capita as Colorado, the least obese state.

Fast food tastes good, fits our faced-paced lifestyle and is inexpensive. Sounds like many problems get solved in a single drive-thru. Right?

But research now shows a direct correlation between fast-food consumption and increased risk for obesity and type 2 diabetes, according to a study funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Other research shows that, because empty fast-food calories do not provide proper nutrition, eating too much of it leads to cravings that may stimulate overeating and taking in even more high-fat and salty foods.

The negatives of fast-food dining include:

- oversized portions
- an excess of calories in small-volume foods
- low fiber content
- over-processing that removes naturally occurring nutrients
- too much hydrogenated or trans fat
- high salt and refined sugar content
- little or no whole grain

Even "healthier" fast food (salads, for example) can contain older produce, include fatty or fried meats and contain high-fructose corn syrup and other less-than-healthy ingredients.

Then there's the issue of our children, for whom fast food has become a staple. Many children grow up accustomed to food loaded with salt, fat and sugar. Perhaps that's one reason childhood obesity is on the rise, with one in three school-aged Louisiana children considered overweight or obese.

The fast-food industry, responding to the public's concerns, has begun sharing the nutritional contents of menu items and introducing healthier foods like yogurt, fruit and veggies. Yet the responsibility for choosing to make healthier choices always rests with the consumer. We remain our own best advocates in the marketplace, and we continue to be the best decision-makers about our own good health.

Fast-Food Survival

When fast food is a necessity, try to make smart choices. Ask yourself these questions:

◆ *What can I do without?*

- If you must have French fries, downsize to a kid's portion.
- If you can do without a bun, do it.
- If you can do without mayo, skip it.
- If you can pass on the sugary ketchup, pass on it.
- Salads are good, but skip the bacon.
- Use less salad dressing than they give you.
- Don't add salt.

◆ *Is a wheat bun available, even if it's kid-sized?*

◆ *What can I add?*

- Ask for extra tomato, lettuce and other veggies on sandwiches.
- Try mustard instead of less-healthy condiments.

◆ *Can I skip the sugary soft drink?*

Water, lowfat milk or fruit juice are healthier options.

◆ *Does this restaurant offer a grilled menu item?*

Skip the battered stuff and go for the grilled.

◆ *What about a veggie burger?*

Some places offer great ones.

Last but not least: Never super-size. Eat kids' portions, even though you're grown.

Sources: EatingWell.com; Trust for America's Health



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5525 REITZ AVENUE • BATON ROUGE, LA 70809-3802