

# Ask an Expert



**My daughter loves to cook and I'd like to get her involved in 4-H. When I was growing up on a farm, I used to be in 4-H food projects. Are there still food projects?**

4-H has a number of food and nutrition projects available for your daughter. She can learn about healthy food selection, smart food purchasing, food safety, food preparation, food preservation, and careers and foods around the world. If she is interested in baking, she can develop her skills necessary to produce a wide variety of baked products, developing skills in measuring, mixing and learning the importance of bread in the diet. North Dakota even has a Baking Boot Camp at Western 4-H Camp. Your daughter can come and learn a wide variety of baking skills that she can use for a lifetime. Campers will go beyond baking and learn some basic fundamental and safety elements of meal preparation as well as learn camp songs, roast marshmallows around the campfire, play games, go swimming and try out the slip 'n slide.

For more information, visit [www.ndsu.edu/4h/](http://www.ndsu.edu/4h/) or contact your local Extension Service office.

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**My nephew, Nick, has a peanut allergy, so he cannot have peanut butter. Is food allergy the same as food intolerance? What would be some alternate snacks for him?**

No, food allergy is not the same as food intolerance. Food allergy involves immune responses to food protein. Immunoglobulin E (immune cells) reacts with harmless food protein and induces immune responses immediately or within two hours of exposure to food protein. The severity of allergic reactions to food can be mild or it can be life threatening. Food intolerance is an adverse reaction to food that does not involve immune responses.

Nick may experience the following symptoms after eating, inhaling or touching peanut butter or any other peanut-containing food products:

- Itching, swelling and/or irritation (lips, inside mouth, throat)
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Cramps
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing
- Narrowing of an airway or wheezing
- Hives
- Low blood pressure
- Abnormal heart beat

To avoid allergic reactions to peanuts, food label reading is very important. Avoid the following ingredients or food products:

- Peanuts, peanut oils, peanut butter, peanut powder, peanut flour, peanut flakes, undisclosed sources of nuts, oil, shortening or nut butter
- Artificial nuts
- Arachis oil (another name of peanut oil)
- Mandelonas (peanuts soaked in almond flavoring)

The following foods often contain peanuts:

- African or Asian dishes (Chinese, Indonesian, Mexican, Thai and Vietnamese dishes)
- Ground or mixed nuts
- Baked cookies, pastries
- Granola bars, energy bars
- Ice cream, frozen desserts
- Grain bread
- Chocolate candies

Try these alternative healthy snack ideas for Nick:

- Fresh cut-up fruits, baby carrots, celery stalks dipped in yogurt or with low-fat cream cheese
- Ready-to-eat cereal and dried fruit mixes for on-the-go snacks
- Banana-strawberry smoothie (blend banana and frozen strawberries with low-fat milk or fruit juice)
- Mini tuna or egg salad sandwich on a dinner roll

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**Every year, I seem to put on more weight. I am 5 feet 8 inches tall and today's weight was 204 pounds. I feel miserable. Every Monday morning, I start a new diet. I try so hard, but by Tuesday at noon, I am so hungry that I eat everything in sight. I have tried the Acai Berry Diet, Atkins, South Beach, Fit for Life, Cabbage Soup Diet and probably several more than I can't remember right now. I even looked at the Tapeworm Diet but am nervous about trying it. I feel awful about myself; my clothes are too tight. My husband doesn't say anything, but he sure raises his eyebrows a lot! Am I destined to be obese the rest of my life? What can I do?**

First, you made a good choice by not trying the tapeworm diet. Many people try almost anything in a desperate attempt to lose extra pounds. Ingesting tapeworms is not only a radical method but also an extremely dangerous one. Fad diets are popular and alluring because of their quick promises with little effort and huge results. Of course, we know that these are not long-term cures and that most of the weight lost quickly returns just as fast.

The best way to lose and maintain a weight loss is by decreasing calories and increasing exercise. Think of a balance scale where the amount of calories we eat must equal the amount we burn to maintain a healthy body weight. Today, food is everywhere. I recently heard the term "toxic food environment." Wherever we turn, we seem to have high-calorie, high-fat foods from which to choose. When did we start requiring ranch dressing with our fresh vegetables or fruit dip? And we sure haven't seen a decrease in obesity rates with all the low-fat and no-fat food products on the market.

About 10 years ago, I started noticing portion sizes were increasing. Our portion sizes have gotten huge. My husband and I share most restaurant meals, but many of them could feed a family of three or four with one menu choice. And we are all getting used to the bigger portions. "Portion distortion" is a new term

defining not only our increased food portion sizes but indicating our serving dishes (plates, cups, glasses) are much larger than they were 20 years ago. Even our furniture has gotten bigger. I still use my aunts' kitchen table from 1935. The table measures 36 by 48 inches and has four chairs with it.

For a more permanent weight loss, try the following tips from the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR). The NWCR was established in 1994 to identify the characteristics of individuals who have succeeded at long-term weight loss. The NWCR is tracking more than 5,000 individuals who have lost significant amounts of weight. The people being studied are successful dieters who have lost a minimum of 30 pounds and maintained that weight loss for more than one year. Recommendations from their success include:

- 78 percent eat breakfast every day.
- Most report maintaining a low-calorie, low-fat diet.
- 75 percent weigh themselves at least once a week.
- 62 percent watch less than 10 hours of TV per week.
- 90 percent exercise, on average, about one hour per day, with the most frequently reported form of activity being walking.

So there is no magic potion or quick weight loss cures. The old saying that "if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is" should be followed. To be successful with your weight loss goals, you should:

- Reduce your calorie intake by 500 to 1,000 calories per day to provide a weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds per week.
- Reduce portion sizes, which is not only an important weight loss strategy but also critical for weight loss maintenance.
- Increase your exercise to include 60 to 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity on most days of the week.

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