

BASIC HEALTHY EATING

This way of eating, though near optimal for most persons, is best individualized to fit the needs of each person's situation. It is based on years of clinical experience and study of the nutritional and medical literature. If you find that this way of eating is far from how you are eating now (an experience shared by many persons!), don't be discouraged. Pace yourself as you **learn to change your relationship to food, allowing at least several months** to accomplish the necessary changes. You will be learning how to **change your eating culture**. Because none of us are perfect, and our life situations are not perfect, if you are like most persons your eating will not always be perfect. That's ok – there's no need for guilt or forcing. Rather, if and when you are ready, start making small steps towards a healthier lifestyle, allowing yourself enough time to accomplish each small goal. Most people find this is best done with the supervision of a professional with expertise in clinical nutrition. If you take small steps regularly, over time you will finally reach the summit of good eating!

HEALTHY EATING:

- ❑ Eat a **variety** of foods that you both **enjoy** and are **healthy** for you. Most foods should be from **local** sources so that they are **fresh, minimally processed** and **safe**. **Freshness is crucial** especially for foods containing **perishable oils** such as whole grain flour products and highly unsaturated vegetable and fish oils. Food grown in third world countries may have unrestricted pesticide applications. Though not mandatory, ideally try to obtain **Organic** produce, or at least that grown using Integrated Pest Management (**IPM**) methods, which minimizes pesticide use.
- ❑ Give the selection, preparation and eating of food the **value** and **care** it deserves. Rediscover the joy of the simple act of preparing and eating wholesome food. We all rely on 'Convenience foods' occasionally when our schedule is hectic, but over reliance carries a heavy price not only in lack of balanced nutrients but in lack of the meaning of food. Don't eat 'on the run'. Brown bag a lunch if there are no satisfactory choices where you work.
- ❑ **Do NOT skip meals**. Spread calories out more or less equally throughout all the meals of the day.
- ❑ **Do NOT 'go on a diet'**. *Diets do not work!* Changing your awareness and relationship with food does.
- ❑ **Be clear if you are eating 'Celebration food' or daily healthy food**. Celebration foods are a major pleasure in life, and are consistent with health if they are occasional (e.g. once or twice a month). A quota of a small serving of a sweet (e.g. two small cookies or a small chocolate bar) a few times/ week is ok, though. Celebration food includes anything deep fried (e.g. French fries, chips), pastries, sodas, sweets. Except during celebrations, **eat enough to satisfy hunger but not more**. While this may seem self-evident, few of us do. This requires taking at least 20 minutes to eat to allow time for the body's satiety (fullness) feedback and listening to this feedback.

- **Avoid processed, prepackaged and ‘convenience’ foods in general** – these tend to be of poor quality and deceptively flavored to mask their lack of nutrients.
 - Any food that has **‘Partially hydrogenated vegetable oils’** (a source of mildly toxic **trans fatty acids** that have been linked with many diseases) is usually of inferior quality and should be avoided. Develop the habit of reading the labels of anything you buy. **Avoid** fats that contain these such as **margarines** or commercial shortening. Added mono- or diglycerides should also be avoided, as they are usually composed of trans fatty acids.
 - **Sugar** or **salt** in *modest* amounts are generally O.K. However if sugar or salt (or one of their equivalents) is within the top few ingredients, generally avoid the food. They are both used frequently in processed foods to compensate for poor quality. Sugar equivalents include sucrose, fructose, glucose, mono- and disaccharides, natural cane sweetener, cane juice, honey, molasses and high fructose corn syrup. Even so called ‘Health food’, such as some forms of Granola or granola bars, and various ‘nutrition bars’ may have excess sugar & calories. Buzzwords such as ‘Natural’ are often used to entice consumers to purchase poor quality food that is loaded with empty calories.
- **Avoid ‘Industrially produced’ red meat** – (the meat one usually encounters in most supermarkets). This usually contains excessive and poor quality fat. If you do eat meat, do so sparingly and use free-range beef (e.g. Coleman brand), buffalo or other livestock instead. Wild game such as venison is excellent if you have access to it. If you must use industrially produced meats, at least choose ‘Select’ grade cuts with *‘loin’* in them (e.g. sir/loin) – the leanest variety and trim away visible fat. Even healthier red meats should be limited as noted below. Even better is **plant sources** of protein:
 - Dark leafy greens have an excellent nutrient/calorie ratio and are an underutilized source of protein. Try to eat at least ½ - 1 cup a day.
 - Soy products such as tofu/soy milk/cheese/burgers (fortified with calcium best), preferably from organically grown soybeans.
 - Legumes (use ‘Beano’ on these once cool enough to eat if gas is a problem).
 - Whole grains + legumes = high quality protein. These don’t need to be eaten at the same meal, just within 24 hours of each other. Examples: [brown rice or whole grain tortillas/bread/pasta] + [beans or lentils or peas].
 - *Wild* cold-water fish from unpolluted waters – this is an excellent source of omega 3 fatty acids (which many peoples have a relative insufficiency of). Be sure is fresh – if it smells or tastes ‘fishy’, its not!
 - White meat of poultry without the skin, preferably free-range can be eaten up to 2 or 3 times per week.
 - Eggs in moderation are O.K., preferably from free-range hens.
 - Lean red meat from free-range livestock that has been fed a natural diet, and has not been fed animal by-products nor given hormones or antibiotics can *occasionally* be eaten (e.g. 1 to 3 times/week).
 - Low fat (e.g. skim or 1% milk or yogurt) dairy, preferably from cows raised on organic farms allowed to graze on grass. Use Lactaid[®] drops or pre-treated milk if you have trouble digesting it.

Total amount of **high protein foods** per day is generally **6 to 7 exchanges per day** for most people, and should be **mainly from plant sources**. (Remember, an exchange is counted as only 1 oz. of lean meat, so 3 exchanges = 3 oz. of meat = the size of a deck of cards = 1 small hamburger = 1/2 of a whole chicken breast = 1 fish fillet = 1 1/2 cup tofu or beans.) **View animal products more as ‘garnishes’ rather than the centerpiece of a meal.**

- Be sure to get **2 to 3 exchanges of a high calcium food**. Low fat dairy has the highest amount of calcium. Fish with small bones such as salmon & sardines are a good source. Vegetarian sources include dark leafy greens of the Brassica family (e.g. kale, collards, bok choy & broccoli), calcium-fortified soy products, corn tortillas processed with lime and dried beans, nuts and seeds (almonds, brazil nuts, sesame seeds). Note: certain vegetables high in oxalic acid such as spinach actually impair calcium absorption. Teens, young adults and pregnant or lactating women need 3 exchanges per day.
- Include **cultured foods** in your diet. These contribute probiotics (‘friendly bacteria’) to the gut, which appear essential for health. Examples: Live culture yoghurt, kefir, tempeh, miso, etc.
- Try to eat a minimum of 3 but better **4 to 7 exchanges of vegetables** per day. (This is in addition to fruit!). Choose vegetables that are different colors – this will help ensure you receive the range of nutrients they offer. Include **at least 1 exchange of a dark leafy green vegetable each day**. These include Kale, Collards, Chard, Spinach, and Broccoli.
- **Fruit** is best eaten whole (better than juice or ‘juice drinks’). Minimum is 2, but **3 – 4 whole fruit (exchanges)/day** are optimal for most people.
- **Carbohydrate (starch) sources should be unrefined and complex** with low to medium glycemic index, so they are absorbed gradually into your system and don’t lead to insulin surges. Examples of these include:
 - Legumes such as beans & lentils (also double as protein source)
 - Whole grains such as brown rice (basmati rice is good), wheat or oat berries,
 - Whole grain *sprouted* or *100% stone ground* flour products (**avoid finely milled white or ‘enriched’ or even whole wheat flour products in general, as these have a high glycemic index**).
 - Starchy tubers – e.g. yams & squash. Potatoes are less nutritious – eat less often (<3 X/week). Starchy vegetables are best if eaten whole, rather than in their more processed forms such as commercial French fries or chips.
 - Have **1 – 3 carbohydrate exchanges/meal**. You can be more liberal with carbs if you exercise after eating them, or within 2 hours post-vigorous exercise. Vigorous exercisers who need to maintain or gain weight may need even more.

- **'Healthy fats'** include:
 - For any use involving **heating**, use **Olive, Canola** or **Sesame** oil (Extra virgin, expeller- expressed best for *all* oils). *Never overheat any oil* (i.e. until it smokes)! A *small* amount of butter, lard or coconut or palm oil can *occasionally* be used, but do not overuse these saturated fats.
 - For **unheated** purposes such as salad dressings, use **Polyunsaturated oils** such as Sunflower, soy or nut oils. Keep in refrigerator and use within a few weeks to **ensure freshness**. Avoid cottonseed and peanut oil.
 - **Flaxseed** oil or plain flaxseeds are a source of the essential omega 3 fatty acid linolenic acid. Many persons have a relative insufficiency in omega 3's. Use in salad dressings or for any *unheated* use. Buy this very perishable oil in *small, opaque* bottles that are ideally *nitrogen packed* and stabilized with antioxidants such as Vitamin E. Try to use it up within a few weeks. Keep flaxseed oil in the *refrigerator*, not in a cabinet. Keep flaxseeds in a small container in the freezer door and get in the habit of sprinkling them on salads, cereals, etc.
 - **Fish oils** as noted above. These also must be very fresh and protected from oxidation like all highly unsaturated oils.
 - **'Spectrum spread'** or similar brands can be used as a fat spread instead of butter or margarine. This is found in health food stores.
 - **Nuts & seeds** or 'butters' made from these in moderation are a source of both protein and fats.

- Drink **plenty of fluid** –8-glasses/day– water or 'flavored waters' are better than fruit juice, juice drinks or sodas.

- Observe the following **maximum limits** per day:
 1. Coffee or strong tea: Two cups (8 oz. each – not large mug size!) total
 2. Sodas: One 12 oz. can
 3. Sweets: 1 serving (e.g. slice of pie or cake or 2 small cookies). Eat sweets slowly and mindfully so you can savor and really enjoy them. Do not eat sweets while distracted with something else such as watching TV, as this often leads to eating a much greater quantity. **Do not deprive yourself of sweets/ deserts** – doing so often triggers a reactive eating binge later.
 4. If you do drink, do so in moderation: Maximum of 2 drinks/day for men and 1 drink/day for women. Pregnant & lactating women should not drink any alcohol. 1 drink=12 oz can of beer, 4 oz. of wine or 1 oz. (1 shot) of distilled spirits.

- **Avoid going to fast food/ cheap restaurants** such as McDonald's[®], Burger King[®], Wendy's[®], Friendly's[®], Pizza hut[®], Taco Bell[®], etc., since the food is generally low quality.

COOKING METHODS:

1. Vegetables: Best is steaming or light sautéing. Microwave ok. Avoid boiling (loses a lot of the water-soluble vitamins). Try to eat both raw and cooked veggies.
2. Meats: Boiling, baking or light sautéing ok.
3. Generally avoid grilling, charbroiling, or deep fat frying. Marinating meats in a vinegar or lemon juice - based marinade and avoiding 'flare-ups' or high temperatures will minimize cancer-causing substances being formed if you want to grill.

STORAGE METHODS:

- Fresh is always best, but freezing is next best. Be careful of excess sodium in canned foods.

1 'EXCHANGE' =

- **Carbohydrates:** 1 slice of bread, 1/2 of a bagel, or 3/4 cup dried prepared cereal or 1/2 cup cooked cereal, pasta or grain dish, or 1 small cooked potato or corn on the cob or 1 small fruit (fruit counts as both a carbohydrate and a fruit exchange).
 - **Vegetables:** 1/2 cup cooked or 1 cup raw (e.g. salad).
 - **Fruit:** 1 medium apple or similar fruit, or 1/2 cup fruit juice.
 - **High protein foods:** 1/2 cup of cooked beans, peas or lentils or tofu or 1 oz (~28 grams) of fish, poultry, red meats, cheese or 1 egg.
 - **Soy/ Dairy:** 1 cup soy/ rice milk or dairy milk or yogurt or 1 oz. cheese.
 - **Sweets/ treats:** 1/2 cup ice cream or 2 medium (2 – 3" diameter) cookies or small wedge of pie/ cake.
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- While **supplements** have their place, they **should always be a far second to eating real whole foods**. Very few supplements have been shown in scientific studies to improve health. Some exceptions in certain situations include Vitamin D, Fish oil (omega 3 fatty acids), Calcium, and Iron (especially in women). Even these are better obtained naturally if possible. Relying on supplements is a form of reductionism – the opposite of holism. Seek competent medical advice before using supplements.
 - **Nutrients in foods *work together***, analogous to musicians in a symphony working together to create beautiful music. When you take a single nutrient, or even a collection of similar nutrients, especially if you mega dose, the result may be analogous to the oboe in the symphony playing 10 times louder – it does not necessarily help the music! Even a mixture of supplements cannot possibly hope to simulate the vastly complex interactions inherent in whole foods.
 - **Avoid any health care practitioner or health advice resource that makes supplements (or drugs for that matter) a *centerpiece* of their advice instead of prioritizing whole foods, or who has a financial interest in selling supplements to you.**

FURTHER READING:

- ❑ **American Wholefoods Cuisine** (Plume Publishers) by Nikki & David Goldbecks. Excellent basic guide on how to create appetizing whole plant based meals.
- ❑ **The New Laurel's Kitchen** (Ten Speed Press Publishers) by Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders, & Brian Ruppenthal.. A vegetarian approach, but helpful for everyone who wants to learn how to prepare these foods in a delicious and healthy manner. The introduction has a nice primer on basic good nutrition that can be useful for even non-vegetarians.
- ❑ **Picture Perfect Weight Loss** (Warner Books) & **Picture Perfect Weight Loss Cookbook** (Rodale) by Dr. Howard M Shapiro. Excellent, scientifically sound Food Awareness program and accompanying cookbook useful for all, not just those who want to lose weight.
- ❑ **Amazing Soy** (William Morrow Publishers) by Dana Jacobi. If you want to include healthier and delicious soy based foods in your meals, this book will show you how.
- ❑ **Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone** by Deborah Madison. Publisher: Broadway Books, 1997. An excellent guide to cooking vegetables in interesting and tasty ways that can be used by vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike.
- ❑ **The Omnivore's dilemma, In Defense of Food & Food Rules** by Michael Pollan. Penguin Books. These books explain where our food comes from and the strengths, weaknesses and toxicities of American food culture.
- ❑ **Eat to Live** by Joel Fuhrman, MD. Little, Brown & Co. 2003. Focuses on Nutrient/Calorie ratio as a key to successful weight loss. Useful to all to further understand a healthy diet.
- ❑ **Mindless Eating** by Brian Wansink, PhD. Bantam Books, 2006. Explains how we all eat for reasons other than to satisfy hunger and what to do about it.

GOALS TO WORK ON:

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2. _____

3. _____

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