

# Diet for Good Health

Maintaining a consistently healthful diet is essential for good health. If your diet is not optimum now and you find the prospect of improving it too challenging, the good news is that you can become accustomed to a dietary change in 3 months of consistent effort. After 6 months you will feel more comfortable continuing it than reverting to your previous diet. So, try to bear with recommended nutritional changes for just 3 months, and discover how much better you will feel maintaining your new improved eating habits. (Any food you are sensitive to should, of course, be avoided, so keep me informed if you suspect any food intolerance.)

## **Common Causes of Difficulty in Weight Control:**

- Improper balance of carbohydrate with protein (carbohydrate dominance promotes insulin resistance, which causes diabetes and contributes to other chronic diseases);
- Fructose/corn-based sweeteners (cause belly fat, triglycerides, gout, insulin resistance);
- Toxic burden in the body (accumulation of toxic chemicals and/or heavy metals, which poison cell enzymes and slow down your metabolism!);
- Biochemical inflammation in the body (caused by chronic diseases and metabolic imbalance, including obesity; obesity increases inflammation which causes more obesity!). Choose anti-inflammatory foods, not pro-inflammatory foods (see below);
- Stress: Emotional/situational, chronic pain, sleep deprivation (<8 hours or irregular schedule);
- Sedentary lifestyle (see my handout on "Exercise for Good Health").

## **Nutritious Eating Principles:**

- Eat 5 servings daily of fresh raw vegetables and fruit (at least one each meal); not commercial juices, which are mostly sugar-water with additives.
- Have a wide variety of both vegetables and fruits every day.
- The brightest-colored vegetables and fruits have the most nutritional and antioxidant content. (Iceberg lettuce is mostly fiber and water, with little nutritional value.)
- You can eat unlimited amounts of above-ground vegetables; don't count calories.
- Every meal should contain some high quality protein, but not large amounts.
- Complex carbohydrates (starchy foods) such as potatoes and grains should be balanced with protein for every meal and snack (no more than twice as much carbs as protein), to control blood sugar and avoid insulin resistance.
- (Ketogenic diets have much lower carbs and higher fats, and work better for controlling insulin resistance. There are different versions; use under professional guidance.)
- Avoid sugar-containing foods and drinks (especially fructose or corn syrup products), and don't add sugar.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners (which stimulate appetite and promote weight gain!). Get used to natural flavors, herbs & spices.
- Avoid factory-processed foods and beverages (which have poor nutritional value and harmful additives, but cost more than real food). Avoid MSG.
- Avoid white flour and white rice products, in favor of whole grains and brown rice.
- Some people need to avoid glutens (wheat, rye, barley, and some oat products) due to genetic intolerance that can damage the immune system and interfere with digestive function and nutrition.
- Try to have a variety of "good fats" (including essential oils) in every meal: olive oil, fish

oil, flaxseed oil, and coconut oil are good (these are anti-inflammatory, and are not fattening, and do not raise cholesterol risk).

- Avoid hydrogenated and "trans" fats, including margarine & most fast foods, packaged and fried foods (these are pro-inflammatory and promote obesity, diabetes and cancer).
- Avoid cooking with unsaturated fats (liquid oils); heat can damage them and turn them into harmful "trans" fats! Add them after cooking. Cook with saturated fats such as butter or coconut oil; they are much more stable in heat (and do not raise cholesterol risk!)
- Avoid burned (grilled or barbecued) foods; these cause cancer, just like burning tobacco and putting it into your lungs!
- Don't cook any food that can be eaten raw (unless otherwise instructed).
- Stock your kitchen with only healthful choices.
- Have regular mealtimes.
- Eat slowly, and chew your food well; poorly chewed or partially digested food breeds harmful intestinal bacteria, which are eager to digest anything down there that you don't, and then multiply and make you sick (Irritable Bowel Syndrome!).

### Helpful hints:

- Avoid excess carbohydrate in proportion to protein (in each meal or snack) to minimize food cravings and weight gain. Carb overload (not dietary fat) causes obesity.
- Anti-inflammatory foods (raw vegetables, fruit, essential oils, herbs and spices) promote good health, weight control, and avoiding insulin resistance; pro-inflammatory foods (trans fats, fast foods, processed foods) do the opposite.
- Most herbs and spices are anti-inflammatory when mixed with food: garlic, onions, chives, ginger, turmeric, basil, parsley, cinnamon, black pepper, green tea.
- Minimize hot chili peppers, Tabasco sauce and jalapenos (pro-inflammatory).
- The most intensely colored fruits and vegetables are the most nutritious.
- Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale) & onions, garlic and chives, are anti-inflammatory, and help to fight cancer and toxic chemicals.
- Corn and potatoes are carbs, not just "vegetables"; carrots are better.
- Fiber (the bulky undigested material in fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, beans and whole grains) helps remove harmful intestinal bacteria and toxins, and they slow absorption of carbohydrates to minimize insulin resistance.
- Berries and grapes (if free of pesticide residue) are very anti-inflammatory and beneficial for weight control and minimizing insulin resistance.
- Probiotic bacteria in fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, kefir, kimchi, miso, tofu, tempeh, and natto, help digestive function, nutritional absorption and the immune system (70% of which is around the intestinal tract).
- Probiotics in pill form work much better than antibiotics and other drugs in curing acute stomach and intestinal infections. Lactobacillus species are good for upper GI problems; Bifidobacterium species and especially Saccharomyces boulardii (a probiotic yeast) are good for lower GI problems. (If you have to take antibiotics, take probiotics for at least a week afterward to help your intestinal tract recover normal beneficial bacteria.)
- Insulin resistance (which is caused by a pro-inflammatory high-carb diet) promotes many chronic diseases including diabetes, and is present long before diabetes is evident.
- Multivitamin pills do not replace a well-balanced nutritional diet, and many commercial ones are "junk".
- Yo-yo dieting impairs immune function and interferes with weight control.
- Look for safe foods; see the Environmental Working Group (<https://www.ewg.org/>).