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Healthy Eating

By Robert P. Goldman, MD

General principles

There are hundreds of books available on nutrition and healthy eating with some authors claiming the “big killer” is fat, while others blame carbohydrates or accuse salt as the culprit. Some say the solution is a vitamin supplement, protein powder, blenders or juice machines. I will explain some of the reasons, but most organic foods are non-GM, are pesticide free and less toxic.

The general rule for healthy eating is basic and simple:

Eat

- Real food, not processed
- Lots of vegetables
- Some fruits
- A little animal protein

Limit intake

- Carbohydrates
- Alcohol
- Salt

Vegetables

Vegetables should take up most of the volume and weight on your plate. The various colors found in veggies are the **vitamins and nutrients** — your plate should be very colorful with multiple shades of green, yellow, orange and red (even purple and blue). The fiber found in vegetables will keep bowels healthy and promote regular movements of soft stools. Fiber also traps toxins, aiding in removal from the body.

Fruits

Fruits should be the second biggest volume of what you eat, coupled with a variety of colors. Eat whole fruits and if appropriate, eat the skin — most of the vitamins are found in the skin. Many fruits contain natural sugar and less fiber (versus vegetables) and should be eaten in smaller quantities. Limit juices and smoothies, as liquids quickly bypass the digestive enzymes in the mouth and stomach, making a beeline directly into the intestine. While sugar is being rapidly absorbed, the nutrients cannot be processed properly, resulting in raised insulin

levels and promoting weight gain. An 8 oz. glass of juice can contain sugar and calories equivalent to eating a dozen pieces of fruit. Take the time to chew and swallow whole pieces of fruit – it reduces the intake of sugar and calories.

Animal products

It is OK to eat a little animal product (mostly poultry and seafood; occasional red meat). Animals living on small farms eat a wide variety of foods, but unfortunately, U.S. chickens, cows and pigs that live on industrial farms are mostly locked in crowded barns and pens. Most of their food is high sugar and genetically modified (GM) corn. More animals become diabetic and because they live so close together, are given antibiotics to prevent infections. Buy free-range poultry or grass fed meat. A daily amount of four to six ounces a day is plenty (the size of the palm of your hand). Avoid meats with a lot of fatty marble — that is where toxins are stored.

Control carbohydrates

Most U.S. corn, wheat, sugar beets, and russet potatoes are genetically modified and grown on industrial farms. Because prices are so low, many restaurants serve heaping portions. Foods such as bread, candy, potatoes, chips, soft drinks, sweetened tea, pancakes, cereals and ice cream turn to sugar in the blood. In addition to raising blood sugar and insulin levels, carbohydrates can also lead to elevated cholesterol, weight gain and disease.

Note: If you sit at a desk all day, carbohydrate foods should include only a small part of your diet.

Alcohol

No alcohol at all is probably the healthiest, but one small (6 oz.) glass of wine daily is probably OK. Wine and beer contain a big calorie load and makes weight loss very difficult. More than two servings of alcohol daily are associated with many medical issues including breast and other cancers.

Salt

The cells of the plants and animals we eat contain mostly potassium and our body fluids and blood contain mostly sodium (common salt NaCl). To maintain proper balance, we need to eat mostly potassium, but not too much sodium. Like sugar, salt used to be in short supply and our bodies craved it. Now we are getting too much — excessive salt intake leads to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Replace recipes requiring salt with herbs and spices — it is healthier and tasty!

Eat real food

Artificial sweeteners are foreign chemicals, not food. They raise insulin levels and cause weight gain. Artificial fats are often added for texture, moisture, shelf life and high temperature cooking. They become incorporated into our nerve tissue and harm brain function. Preservatives extend shelf life by killing bacteria and fungi. Artificial colors are added to make bad food look better and can cause allergic reactions (possibly hyperactivity in children). When purchasing real, whole food from the produce, meat and dairy sections, the likelihood of many artificial ingredients are excluded.

Probiotics

Intestines are home to billions of microorganisms consisting of mostly bacteria, fungi or yeast. We could not survive without the organisms in our gut as they help digest food, manufacture vitamins and other required chemicals. The organisms calm our immune system and require a healthy mix of beneficial bacteria. Good bacteria prefer plant food with a lot of fiber. Yeasts prefer sugar and actually produce chemicals that increase our craving for sugar.

Probiotics are often known as good or beneficial bacteria, because they help keep the stomach healthy. At one time in the U.S., fermented foods (good bacteria) were in steady supply. Examples were preserved and pickled vegetables, pickles in a barrel, olives, salami, dried hams, sauerkraut, and Korean kimchi. These are all examples of probiotic foods. Natural yogurt is about the only probiotic food currently sold in the U.S. Eating a variety of vegetables, reducing intake of sugar and starches, and eating probiotic foods all contribute to healthy gut bacteria. If you can't get enough probiotic food naturally, probiotic capsules are available in health food stores.

Buying, preparing and enjoying real, organic, wholesome food can be a fun adventure. Your body and brain will thank you. Enjoy!!