

AVOIDING UNHEALTHY FOODS

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The evolution of man over the last several hundred thousand years in terms of food intake has been extremely varied. The earliest Stone Age people in the Paleolithic Period survived from about 500,000 years ago to about 10,000 years ago. The diets at that time were about 70% vegetables/fruits/roots and 30% animal meat. It was during this time that natural selection of genes allowed development of favorable characteristics which allowed us to develop into the human beings we are. Even though these genes are thousands of years old, they still support us in the same manner that they did as we were developing and evolving during the Stone Age. Contrast the lean and often inadequate diet that Stone Age people ate to our overabundance of foods that are higher in fat, salt, sugar, and carbohydrates. At the same time, fiber, vegetables, and minerals are not nearly present in a high content as they were in the wild.

Because we have such abundance, we have eaten our way into disease processes which have increased in number and severity, and it seems to be directly related to the amount and kind of food that we eat. We know that coronary artery disease, Alzheimer's disease, and cancer are but three of the diseases that are strongly nutritionally related and which occur frequently. We also know that the nutrient content of many of the foods that are eaten now is low because they have been stimulated in growth by nitrogen-based fertilizer, but grown in soil year after year that has been stripped of minerals and other natural elements.

In the writings of Dr. Weston Price, who traveled the world back in the early '30s, it is noted that cultures which were studied showed that the genetically similar siblings and children of these more primitive cultures with a diet more similar to the Paleolithic one stayed healthy while the ones who moved to the city and ate a "civilized" diet began to get all of the degenerative diseases. We know, for example, that a culture such as the Pima Indians subsisted for eons on minimal food and never had access to large quantities of carbohydrates as they do now. They developed a special genetic structure which has been termed the "thrifty" gene which helped their body save nearly all the carbohydrates they ate as body fat. Now, this current generation of Indians has more than 50% diabetes and heart disease because all of their carbohydrates go to triglycerides and fat, and this promotes the development of these diseases. The same is true for Eskimos who have eaten a diet consisting of 70 to 80% fat and minimal carbohydrates. When this cultural group is exposed to high carbohydrates, including flour and sugar, the same sorts of problems happen to them. The Aboriginal culture is no different and has experienced the same thing since the landing of the British on the Australian shores in the 1770's.

All of us try to live our lives so that we can be the healthiest possible and avoid sickness and physical deterioration from chronic diseases. How can we set a standard for ourselves that will help us avoid the foods that we need to avoid, thereby allowing more room in our diet for the "better and healthier" foods? Obviously, the first way to do this is to identify the unhealthy foods and to accentuate the healthy ones and make a choice every time you put something into your body. I still like to equate the nutritional elements of food to octane in gasoline. We would never pull up to the pump and ask for 50 octane because we know that our car doesn't run so well on that. However, you may be happy to eat a hamburger with

high saturated and hydrogenated fat content, sugared ketchup, bleached flour bread, and follow it with a chocolate chip cookie loaded with sugar. The nutritional elements in this are so minimal as to almost not be present. A better choice would be smaller quantity of lean meat, whole grain unbleached flour bread, and fruit after the meal as dessert. Add some cheese and nuts for fat content and the profile of that dietary intake seems better.

Of all the major diets which have been touted and promoted in this country over the years, most have in common the elimination of the so-called “white” carbohydrates. Interestingly, the food pyramid used as a standard by nutritionists still has a fair quantity of these particular foods as the basis for the pyramid. The Harvard pyramid is more of a shape of a tall building with refined foods such as breads and sugars listed in a much smaller quantity. Since we know that Paleolithic man survived on a diet of lean meat, nuts, tubers, beans, fruits, and wild grasses and vegetables, we know that it’s possible to live and sustain our lives on those foods. We also know that Paleolithic man was larger in stature than modern man, probably because of the meats which were eaten and combined with physical activity which it took to sustain them.

If you confine your diet to mostly those things which have traditionally been good for man over the years and add nutritional elements we have discovered to be helpful in the development and maintenance of health in man, this would probably be considered the ideal diet. Combine this with the information that nutritional adequacy but restricted calories leads to a longer life in animals, primates, and man and the other part of the equation fits in well.

Therefore, avoidance of foods at every meal and every snack and replacement with one which is healthier is the better pathway. First of all, define your ideal weight and try to stick with that. We know that every pound you gain increases your chance for the diseases mentioned earlier. For breakfast, instead of toast and jelly, perhaps fruit; whole grain cereal, raw nuts, plain yogurt, and protein such as eggs or a small quantity of meat is the better approach. We also know that if you eat all of the food elements with every meal, the body is more able to process and use them in the manner in which they were intended to be used. Therefore, always think protein, carbs, and fat intake at each meal. However, avoid hydrogenated fat, white bread, sugar, and low fiber foods. For lunch, think the same way. Eat a green vegetable, a small amount of protein, some natural starch foods such as potatoes, fruits, etc. Avoid the white bread sandwich with mayonnaise containing hydrogenated fat. Avoid fatty meats and always try to skip the cookie after lunch. Sweets traditionally have been used after meals to stimulate the digestion. This has been done in the form of cordial liquors or sugar-based cakes. If you do eat something sweet after meals, eat only a small quantity and do this slowly to stimulate your digestion. It gives a good feeling and leaves a good taste in your mouth, but remember that quantity rules.

For dinner, the same rules apply in that you need to eat more nutritious and less fattening and unhealthy foods. Anything with bleached flour, wheat products, sugar, hydrogenated fat, and chemical additives will not be healthy for you. Simply read the label of the artificial egg products and you will see that it’s mostly composed of some egg albumen and 8 or 10 chemicals. The egg is healthier, and a free-range egg is probably even healthier.

The main point is that we have come to a time in the evolution of human history that we are able to understand what is healthy and what is not and we are able to make choices on a daily basis because of the availability of good food products. However, it still boils down to personal discipline, and unfortunately this is what keeps many people from being able to stay on a good diet. If you eat an unhealthy meal, remember that a healthy one can be next.

Combine good nutrition with exercise and you will find that your energy levels are unstoppable and your self-image is enhanced greatly.