

COMBINING THE BEST DIETS

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In the past I have written about the Zone Diet, which has been my personal dietary pathway for about 16 years and has served me well. I have found that this diet plan simply follows principles of eating healthy foods in the right proportions and at each meal, and it would serve us all well as would most other diets offered today if you have the personal discipline to do this. I recently wrote in Tidewater Women about the need to maintain an alkaline pH in your body, mostly by eating certain foods and omitting certain others. I have been asked how to combine the Zone Diet along with an alkaline diet, and it is possible to do this. The advantage of combining two diets is that it makes you think even more about what you're eating, and so you can always adjust your intake a little bit to get on an even healthier pathway. In the Zone Diet, about 40% carbs, 30% protein, and 30% fat make a good, well-rounded approach to eating. The success with this diet comes by choosing healthy fats, low glycemic carbs, and good protein because your body needs these food elements all day and all night long to ingest food in this proportion in order to synthesize new cells for turnover and support by having these elements at every meal and every snack. Additionally, staying on a low glycemic diet such as this helps suppress your insulin output, which is the most important indicator of health risks, especially for cardiac disease or diabetes.

To follow a pathway for an alkaline diet, food and beverages that will keep the body pH in the normal range of 7.2 or 7.3 are best. There are many foods and beverages which cause a higher amount of acid which lowers the pH to 7 or below, and this is not ideal.

What are the acid forming foods which are eaten? I am sure that you have been out to dinner and have seen someone at the next table eat an 11-oz. sirloin with a baked potato and no vegetables. On the other hand, you may have been to a vegetarian restaurant where soy protein, eggplant, bread, and cheese furnish the protein intake for that meal. Which is the best to pursue? The answer is that almost any diet can be healthy by eating in the right proportions and by combining good protein to the other items in each meal. However, excess animal or vegetable protein will cause more body acidity, and non-protein foods such as sugar, excess fats, excess grains, and sodas will also act in the same manner. Since we need about 12-13% total protein, much of our protein need can be satisfied by combining plant protein (which is about 10%) in with other food items. Plant proteins are "incomplete," but a combination of beans, nuts, grains, and vegetables can furnish the basis for the body to combine them to make "complete" proteins. Meat, fish, chicken, and soy-based foods furnish complete proteins.

What is a good way to go about your dietary intake every day so that you can have a balance of more alkaline foods, but with a good ratio of carbs, protein, and fat? One easy way to do this is to make a chart for yourself which has three columns – Protein; Carbohydrates; and Fat. Under each column, you might perhaps list 20 foods that you

usually eat, that you like, and are healthy. Each one of these columns would then have a list of 20 so that whenever you are planning a meal, you can use the list to pick one or two items from each column to choose your total meal. For example, if eggs are on your list along with fruit and oil, you could fry an egg in olive oil and eat an apple or some other fruit. Additionally, you could have butter or olive oil on a small piece of whole grain bread. This gives you something fresh and also good protein and good carbohydrates. You can use that combination to decide for all of your meals what you would like to eat. The lists make a good management tool because it not only makes you think about your choices for each meal, but also makes you remember that you must have some of each for every meal and every snack.

Some of the alkaline foods which you could have in your carbohydrate list include green vegetables, sweet potatoes, avocado, beans, raw nuts, and citrus fruits. Remember that vegetables, nuts and beans also have about 10% of their total calories as protein. This helps your thinking when you put your list together for what to eat. Some of the acid-forming foods include dairy, grains, meat, salt, sodas, sugar, alcohol, caffeine, poultry, and eggs. This does not mean that you cannot eat these foods; you just have to have a more moderate portion and then balance it with the alkaline foods on your list. Having milk in your coffee or plain yogurt every morning are good choices, but drinking a glass of milk or eating 3 eggs are not.

It has been shown in laboratory studies and in cancer diet studies that alkaline diets may deter the growth of cancer cells and may aid in chemotherapy. An acid diet increases osteoporosis because it causes more calcium to be excreted as a “buffer” to help bring your acid-based balance to normal homeostasis as much as possible. An alkaline based diet, no sodas, and good exercise make healthy bones.

So you can see, it’s pretty simple to think about acid and alkaline foods, to think about the three components of your diet proposed by the Zone Diet, and how to make the best choices each meal. Many people find that with the Zone Diet and with the alkaline diet that they are able to prevent weight gain, and it even helps them lose weight in a slow, long-term way which is a good life-long approach. The bottom line is to always think about what you’re eating and make good food choices. You won’t be sorry for having to conform to this dietary approach because you will have more energy and better weight control.