

## SO YOU THINK YOU HAVE A HEALTHY DIET?

**Food...** it gives our body the energy it needs to function well. If you don't make sure that the fuel you put into your body is of the right quality, you're not going to function properly and you won't feel as healthy as you could. If you put inexpensive farm diesel fuel in your expensive sports car; sooner or later, it's not going to run properly and will probably break down and be in need of expensive repairs. The human body is no different.

Our body is made up of 100 trillion cells; each one demanding a constant supply of daily nutrients in order to function. Food, the fuel for those cells – affects each and every one of our cells; and thus basically, every aspect of whom we are... from our moods, energy level, critical thinking, sex drive, food cravings, sleeping habits to your general health. ***Simply put – healthy eating is the key to your overall healthy well-being.***

The first step toward turning your health and your life around is to make better choices. In this instance, better food choices. The relationship between food and health is significant. However, ***the first crucial step in making that change is for you to make the connection between good food choices and good health and poor food choices and bad health.*** My aim for participants in our, "Healthy Life by Design" program is to help them make simple changes that will begin to take affect almost immediately and will help improve their health throughout their lifetime. Here are several important food facts:

- A diet high in fat (particularly saturated fat) and high in salt is associated with a known increased risk of coronary heart disease.
- A diet high in fat, sugar and salt leads to weight gain and increases the risk of obesity. Carrying that excess weight doesn't just increase the risk for you to have heart disease, diabetes, cancer and infertility; it is also associated with fatigue, low-self esteem and poor mental and physical performance.
- It's estimated that, on average, a third of all cancers could be prevented by changes in diet. A diet which is high in fiber, whole grain cereal and low in fat has the potential of preventing a number of cancers including stomach and breast cancer.
- Many fertility experts believe that an unhealthy diet, high in fat, sugar, processed foods and low in nutrients essential to fertility can lead to infertility and increase the chances of miscarriage.
- A diet high in additives, preservatives and refined sugar can cause poor concentration, hyperactivity and aggression. This is because foods high in sugar and additives lack chromium, which is removed in the refining process. Chromium is needed for controlling blood sugar levels; when these levels are out-of-control, it can trigger these types of behavioral problems.
- A diet that is low in the essential nutrient calcium (needed to keep your bones strong) increases the risk of bones becoming weak or brittle – a condition known as osteoporosis.
- A diet too high in sugar can lead to too much glucose (a form of sugar carried in the bloodstream) circulating in your body. Too much glucose in the blood indicates development of blood sugar problems such as diabetes mellitus. Its symptoms are: thirst, frequent need to urinate due to excessive glucose, problems with vision, fatigue and recurring infections.
- An unhealthy diet increases the risk of depression and mood swings. It's also linked to PMS, food cravings and anxiety.
- A diet low in nutrients puts enormous stress on the liver. The liver is essential for proper digestion and absorption of life-sustaining vitamins and minerals. For optimum health, you need your liver to be in peak condition. The liver cannot cope with large amounts of saturated fat and alcohol and this can lead to liver and kidney problems such as kidney disease and cirrhosis of the liver.
- If your diet is poor, this can compromise your immune system and make you more susceptible to colds, flu and poor health. We need a steady and balanced intake of essential vitamins and minerals to keep our immune system working properly and to provide protection from infections and disease.

***Notice that a theme of these last 10 points deals with high amounts of sugar, high amounts of fat, improper function of the liver and bowels which in turn lessens your immune system.*** All of which decreases your overall optimum health.

When I consult with patients about their diet, one of the first issues we have to deal with is about the quality of his/her diet. Invariably, most patients tell me that they feel they eat a fairly healthy diet. It's only after we review their "Seven Day Food Diary," that we discover that most of them eat rather poorly; even though they think they have been eating just fine. Most of us eat very similarly to how our parents ate; thus, we justifiably assume we eat a fairly balanced, good diet. However, times have certainly changed. Not only in the quality of

food we eat; the quantity of food we eat; the time of day we eat and for some, the number of meals they eat – some people skip meals routinely.

Either way, before we go any further, I would like you to complete this food intelligence quotient test. ***After adding up your final score and assessing it with our grading scale – you'll quickly be able to find out if you're doing pretty well with your diet or if you need some help.*** Simply answer yes or no to the following 20 questions:

1. Do you eat at least 1 piece of raw food each day?
2. Do you eat at least 5 servings of vegetables each day?
3. Do you eat rice, quinoa, millet, oats and other grains at least 3 times a week?
4. Do you eat a serving of raw vegetables each day?
5. Do you eat raw seeds at least 3 times a week?
6. Do you ever use seaweed in your cooking?
7. Do you include fish in your diet at least once/twice a week?
8. Do you chew your food thoroughly until it's liquefied?
9. Do you go out of your way to avoid foods containing preservatives, additives and/or colorings?
10. Do you avoid foods that contain sugar or added sugar?
11. If you are stressed, do you wait until the feeling has passed before you begin eating?
12. Were you breast-fed as a child?
13. Do you always make sure that you take time to eat properly; even if you feel tired or busy?
14. Do you eat breakfast every day?
15. Do you drink bottled spring water, filtered water or reversed osmosis water every day?
16. Do you drink at least 6 glasses of filtered, spring or mineral water every day?
17. Do you avoid beer/alcohol/soda when eating?
18. Do you drink water approximately 25 minutes before eating your main meals instead of drinking water with the meals?
19. Do you eat a varied diet instead of eating the same foods every day?
20. Do you make raw vegetable juices at least once a week?

Now let's add up your YES answers and look at your score.

- 17-20 yes answers: EXCELLENT! You're at the top of the class!
- 12-16 yes answers: Actually... Not Bad! You could try a little bit harder.
- 11 or less answers: **You're in need of making some lifestyle changes!**

I'll be the first to admit that change is not an easy thing to accomplish. I also know that if you want something to be different and you expect change without doing anything different – you're going to be disappointed. The transformation in your health is going to take time; but, it is well worth the effort! You need to take the time necessary to make these changes; but, ***the good news is that you can start feeling the changes almost immediately.*** For the bulk of my patients, especially once they've reached their healthcare goals – I tell them they can follow the 85-15 percent rule. Make the correct choices 85 percent of the time and that leaves a 15 percent window for the various aspects and events that are going to get in the way of your optimum eating program. Keeping special treats limited to only very special occasions elevates them in importance and enjoyment. Besides... if you have what you like every day as a treat – it really doesn't become a treat anymore.

So challenge yourself and open your mind to all of the new possibilities. Most likely, many of you reading this don't have any idea just how really good you can feel or how much energy you can have. You don't know how sharp your mind can really be and how much happiness you can experience until you start taking steps in the right direction. If you don't challenge yourself toward a new health status by offering your body some nutritious and better food – you just don't have any idea how great you can feel!

Please remember... if you eat dead, lifeless food – your body will eventually feel lifeless. If you eat vital, vibrant and alive foods with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables mixed into your daily diet – you will be full of the inner life force that's natural and available to you. **You and your future health are worth it. The choice... is YOURS!!!**