

# Dietary Guidelines

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What I want to do here is to talk about what constitutes a healthy diet. It is not an easy subject, because there are so many opinions about it, with experts coming up with contradictory opinions that seem to change on a daily basis. When it comes down to it, what constitutes a good diet is so individual, so unique to each person, that it is hard to generalize. That being said, there are some commonalities, which can give us some sense of what is best for good health.

Most of the illnesses that we are dealing with now were much less common a century ago. Very often they have cropped up because of diet and lifestyle changes. Much of what I suggest is based upon the work of Weston Price, DDS, who did his work in the mid 1900s. He studied cultures where the people were eating in traditional ways and were healthy. Healthy for Dr. Price meant relative freedom from chronic diseases, healthy teeth, and good jaw structures (he was a dentist after all), with good resistance to infection, and resilience in their health in general. He found cultures that were incredibly diverse, eating very diverse diets, from Inuits in the Arctic to (then) isolated peoples in high Alps valleys, Shetland islanders, and people living high in the Andes. Dr. Price traveled the world, finding many cultures whose diets met his standards for health-giving qualities. The diet he recommended was based upon what was in common between them.

## **General Principles**

- The first thing is the most basic of all. Eat real food. Eat meat, fish, fresh eggs, nuts, seeds, whole grains (if tolerated), fresh, cooked and fermented fruits and vegetables, dairy products - foods that have not been altered excessively in processing.
- At each meal eat some fat, protein, and carbohydrate. This will help to keep your energy and blood sugar more even.
- Keep alcohol more moderate. Always make sure that you have eaten some protein and fat foods if you are imbibing at all. This slows the rapid blood sugar rise that comes from drinking alcohol.
- Avoid MSG, aspartame, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, and texturized vegetable protein. These substances are or contain what are called “excitotoxins,” substances that over stimulate certain brain and nervous system cells and cause them to die prematurely. Search “Blaylock and excitotoxins” on Google for more information.
- If you are having any problems with your thyroid especially, and generally for anyone, it is best to drink water that has not been chlorinated. Chlorine interferes

with thyroid function. The fluoride that is added to water has a similar adverse effect in the body. You might consider getting a reverse osmosis system for your drinking water. Companies like Culligan will install and maintain them for you. The systems that you can buy at Menards are slower and waste a lot more water.

- Speaking of thyroid, it is commonly helpful to add supplemental iodine to your diet if you have any trouble here. Iodine is a common deficiency. Iodine used to be added to bread as a dough conditioner, but is no longer used this way. Instead, bromine is used, which blocks iodine in the body. Bromine is also a common additive in flame retardant fabric coatings. This, along with the decrease in consumption of iodized salt, has left many of us deficient in iodine. Sea salt is not a good source of iodine. Seafood and seaweed are. It is not generally known that iodine is concentrated (and needed) in the ovaries and breast tissue of women, and in many other tissues in the body. Breast and ovarian cysts may be related to iodine deficiency. Iodine is also critically important in pregnant women. If you are going to add iodine, it would be good to add selenium before you start the iodine.
- Soy products, especially soymilk, are not so good for you. They are too strongly estrogenic, are anti-thyroid, and can disrupt hormones in the body. It is my understanding that in Asia, soy has been used more as a condiment than as a staple, and it was usually fermented. Fermented soy products such as miso and tempeh are much better for you and much easier to digest.
- Fermented vegetables, especially live sauerkraut (not the pasteurized type) found in the refrigerator section of a food co-op and at Whole Foods, are really good for the digestive tract. You can eat a heaping tablespoon before meals. Eat it raw. Cooking destroys the enzymes and the beneficial bacteria. The co-ops have a number of different kinds of locally made sauerkraut in the refrigerator section. You can also learn to make your own. See Sally Fallon, [Nourishing Traditions](#). You can also try Kvaas, a wonderfully tart probiotic drink available at co-ops.
- It is important to get a good bit of raw food into your diet each day.
- As to dairy, this is somewhat tricky. A lot depends upon how the cows are raised and the breed of the cows. In general, organic is better. Whole milk is better than 2% or skim. Unhomogenized is much better. Homogenization does something to the fats causing them to be much less healthful. Homogenization may make the milk more allergenic by encapsulating the protein in little fat globules that can be absorbed directly through the gut wall without digestion.
- Milk from cows that are 100% pastured will be very different from milk from cows that must be fed grain to meet their caloric requirements. In general, Jerseys and Guernseys are bred to do pretty well on most or all pasture. Holsteins usually need grain to produce adequate milk, though some farmers are breeding Holsteins that can do well on pasture. Whole milk yogurt and Kefir are excellent foods. Goat yogurt and goat kefir, as well as sheep yogurt, are good foods.

- Unrefined sea salt is best to use. It has more minerals. You can get Celtic Sea Salt at a food co-op or at Whole Foods. Bone broths are also excellent for minerals. See the book, Nourishing Traditions as well as Nourishing Broth.
- Another issue that is noteworthy is that microwaves, for all their convenience, are not at all good to use. Microwave heating damages fats and proteins in a way that our bodies do not really know what to do with.
- Please use stainless steel, glass, or cast iron cookware. Avoid aluminum and non-stick because these leach substances into our food that are somewhat toxic.
- Consider getting a deep freeze - the kind that needs to be defrosted. Many of the meats and other products are only available seasonally. A deep freeze helps with storage. Regular freezers dry the food out too much (freezer burn).
- Avoid storing foods in plastic. It is much better to use glass.

### **Protein**

- It is very important for adults to have adequate protein at each meal. With children, they need good quality protein as well, but their system is so geared to growth that they will take every bit of protein and try to build a good body out of it. With adults, the growth drive is much lessened. It is the protein intake that actually triggers repair and maintenance of muscle and bone. There needs to be adequate protein for this repair to be triggered. For the average person this works out to be about 25-30 grams of mixed animal and vegetable protein at each meal. A small detail here - the protein needs to be eaten as a meal rather than spread out over an hour or two. (Sorry to those that like to make a protein shake and take it in slowly.)
- If you are adapted to easily and readily burn fat, the requirement for protein is substantially less, as much less of your protein is being pulled into providing an alternate fuel for your body. (See a separate paper titled "Macronutrients and Health").
- Eating adequate protein and fat will promote a feeling of satisfaction and fullness which will generally "hold" you for 4-6 hours.
- Have a minimum of two, and preferably three meals with adequate protein in them each day.

### **Fats**

- Avoid refined vegetable oils such corn, soy, canola, safflower, sunflower, and cottonseed oils. These oils have a lot of omega six fats which tend to cause disorder and inflammation in the body when they are isolated from the food that contains them and, most importantly, damaged in processing, or adulterated for use in processed and fast foods. The other issue is a matter of quantity. We were never designed to take in the quantity of these types of fats that we find in the modern diet. Getting omega six fats from the raw, unprocessed nuts, seeds, and other foods that contain them is a very good way to consume them.

- There is some thought that people on a highly processed diet may actually be deficient in undamaged omega 6 and omega 3 fats, while being overloaded on excessive amounts of processed omega 6 fats. For these people, stopping the processed omega 6 fats found in the above oils, while supplementing unrefined omega 6 fats, might be a very good idea for a time.
- Do use cold pressed, organic, unrefined olive oil, coconut oil, butter, ghee, sesame, flax, and macadamia nut oils. Coconut oil and palm oil got a bad rap in the early 60s because of their saturated fat content. The saturated fats are short and medium chain fats which the body will tend to burn rather than store. They will not clog your arteries. When you hear about these fats causing a problem, the studies that are cited used hydrogenated coconut oil, which is very harmful. Use raw, organic, unprocessed coconut oil. Flax oil should never be heated. Use it straight up as a supplement or as part of a homemade salad dressing.
- Know that when you use most any oil for frying, the fats will be damaged. Using a fat for frying that is higher in saturated fats will be less likely to result in damage to the fat. Tallow, lard, coconut oil, and especially ghee are traditional fats used this way. When making a sauté, do it as many Asian chefs do - throw in water frequently to keep the temperature at a more reasonable level. If it smokes or if the food that is cooked is excessively brown, you have likely damaged the fats. If I accidentally heat a fat too much and it starts to smoke, I start over. These damaged fats are quite a burden on the body. Refined, organic coconut oil adds little or no flavor to your food. Ghee has a very pleasant buttery flavor.
- Avoid like the plague “partially hydrogenated \_\_\_\_\_ oil” (there are many kinds.) These fats have been damaged in the processing and contain what are called “trans fats” which are incredibly hard on the body. Even if the label says “trans fat free,” it probably has trans fats if the oil has been hydrogenated. By law, the label can say “trans fat free” even if there are 500mg of trans fats or less. Any amount is harmful.
- Fat has been demonized for many years, especially saturated fat. We all need saturated fats in our diet, because saturated fats are used to make healthy cell membranes, including the membranes in our nervous system.
- The problem fats are, by and large, not the saturated fats. What are harmful are fats that have been damaged - by hydrogenation, by inappropriate extraction methods, and fats that are oxidized, that is, rancid. Rancid oils can be deodorized so that they do not taste bad, but they are very harmful. There are little or no saturated fats in atherosclerotic plaques. It is the damaged oils and chronic, low grade inflammation that precipitates the harm to the arteries.

### ***Carbohydrates: Sugars and Starches***

- Decrease or avoid refined sugars of all kinds. Most especially harmful is “high fructose corn syrup.” Consumption of this sugar has increased in a huge way in the last 30 years. It is really not good for you. It will cause your appetite to increase, cause insulin resistance and fatty liver, and eventually cause type 2 diabetes.

- High fructose corn syrup contributes to chronic inflammation in the body, a condition that is at the back of most of our modern “diseases of civilization”. It is the number one cause of fatty liver disease, itself probably the main cause of insulin resistance. It is very often contaminated with the herbicide atrazine or with another harmful herbicide, glyphosate. Glyphosate has a very damaging effect on your gut microbiome.
- Another refined sugar is called agave nectar, which gives us visions of the sweetness of flower nectar. Agave nectar is made from the roots of the agave plant. The same processes used to make high fructose corn syrup are used to make agave “nectar.” It should really be called “high fructose agave syrup.”
- “Amino sweet” is just another name for Aspartame. Don’t eat it.
- A bit of honey, maple sugar, or sucanat (unrefined organic cane or beet sugar) is OK.
- For many people, grain simply does not work that well. Keep it more moderate. Decrease your consumption of white flour products - pasta, bagels, breads, etc.
- Sourdough breads are easier to digest.
- Grains are easier to digest if you soak them overnight in water with a teaspoon or two of cider or white vinegar. Rinse and cook. (See the article I have on grain preparation.)
- A trial period off of all grain is worthwhile in most any chronic condition. It sounds harder than it is. Don’t be afraid to try it.
- If you crave sugar, you may be low in serotonin. There are good ways to support serotonin levels. You may also benefit from supplementation with chromium.
- When eating sweets, eat slowly. If you pay attention, you will often notice that the first bite or two is all that is needed to satisfy the craving. More than that is just habit or social convention as to what constitutes dessert or a portion.
- Craving sweets may be an indication that you are in a state I like to call “carb-dependence” where you have little access to the stored fat in your body and are dependent on ingested sugar or starch for fuel. This is a whole topic which I cover in a separate paper titled *Macronutrients and Health*.
- Whole fruit is good in moderation. Fruit juice is usually too sweet and causes a stronger rise in blood sugar and an increase in inflammation.
- Avoid puffed cereals. They are pretty much devoid of good nutrition because of the damage caused in making them. They can cause a bounce in blood sugar that can raise triglycerides and increase inflammation.
- High triglycerides (anything above 100) come mostly from too many carbohydrates in your diet, (especially fructose from high fructose corn syrup), and not enough fat and protein.

## ***Meats and Fish***

- The meats that are especially good to eat are grass fed, grass finished beef, bison, lamb, wild caught fish, (especially Alaskan salmon), sardines, pastured or organic chicken and turkey.
- Eggs (organic, free-range) are an excellent food.
- The reason for “grass fed, grass finished” or “100% grass fed” is that if an animal is given grain, especially corn, the fats in the meat change and are much less good for you. It has gotten to the point where I don’t trust any of the scientific studies that say that meat consumption is associated with increased risk of one disease or another. The meats that are being consumed in these studies are completely different from meats from animals that have been properly raised on their natural food - grass.
- Likewise, the fats in farm-raised fish are totally different from their wild counterparts because of what they are fed. The fishmeal pellets that are fed to farm raised fish contain animal byproducts, corn, soy, fishmeal with rancid fats, and chicken feathers. Unless they were forced to, no self-respecting wild fish would ever eat what passes for food for these farm-raised fish.

### **Vegetables**

- Eat lots of vegetables of all kinds, especially the non-starchy ones. The more colorful, the better. Learn to like kale. It is a powerhouse.
- Steaming is a wonderful way to cook vegetables. The food can be cooked lightly. Flavor and color are preserved.

### **Fiber**

- Eating real, whole foods will be naturally higher in fiber, a dietary component very much lacking in the standard American diet. Fiber feeds the gut bacteria which helps keep your gut wall healthy. Not eating enough fiber will lead to the bacteria in your gut digesting the mucus coating of your gut wall - not a good thing at all. This may result in so-called “leaky gut” or increased intestinal permeability. Fiber sources include vegetables, seeds, nuts, bran, whole grains, and beans.
- Supplemental fiber can also be had with ground flax seed, chia seeds, and psyllium. Having a mix of these seeds and powders can really support gut wall health. Sometimes I will put together a bulk mixture of these powders, adding in some sunflower lecithin. Having a heaping tablespoon or two of this mix can be very helpful for gut health. A stainless steel wire mixing ball is very helpful for mixing the powder with water. Just put the powder in a glass jar with water and the mixing ball. Shake and drink.
- Another, perhaps healthier, option would be to make a bone broth from your favorite bones. Chop up a large variety of vegetables and make a vegetable soup with the broth. Blend the soup and have this as an accompaniment to a regular meal. I usually make many quarts of this in advance, freezing it so that I most always have some available. Flavor it with fresh herbs, miso, curry, or whatever strikes you.

### **Nuts**

- Nuts of all kinds are good for you. It would be better if they were raw rather than roasted. There is a way to prepare them that makes them tastier and easier to digest. (See Sally Fallon Nourishing Traditions, the section on snack foods.)

### **Fat Soluble Vitamins**

- One of the common denominators found in all the diets that Dr. Price looked at was the relative abundance of fat-soluble vitamins, especially vitamins A and D. All of the people Dr. Price studied especially valued food sources that were high in these vitamins - high vitamin butter, fish eggs, cod liver oil, eggs, liver, and other organ meats, etc.- searching them out to give to pregnant women, growing children, and those that were acutely ill.

### **Meal Timing**

- If you have gotten into the habit of multiple small meals each day, you will not trigger the repair and maintenance mode in your metabolism. There is not enough protein for your body to get the signal that there is enough protein on board to initiate tissue repair. The signal is primarily an amino acid called leucine. Leucine is found in abundance in animal food including dairy.
- Eating breakfast can be very important. Adequate protein at breakfast is very important as well. During the nighttime fast, we are breaking down fat and protein. It is the first protein intake of the day that shifts the body into repair and maintenance mode. If you do not eat adequate protein until dinner, you are spending the entire day without much in the way of tissue repair and maintenance.
- On the other hand, there is no particular requirement for breakfast if you get adequate protein, fat, and calories during the rest of the day. It is actually quite healthful to eat your food in a limited stretch of time during the day. See my article called *Fasting Basics* for more information.
- If you need to manage your blood sugar by eating, your metabolism has become inefficient and sluggish. Eating a better balance of foods, avoiding excessively refined foods, and training your body to readily use fat for fuel will restore balance over time. Again, see my paper *Macronutrients and Health* for more information.

### **Resources**

- Please read the first 70 or so pages of Nourishing Traditions. This cookbook has a lot of excellent information on nutrition.
- There are many farms in Minnesota and western Wisconsin that have good quality pasture raised meat, poultry, and eggs. Many of them deliver in the Twin Cities. Some come to the farmers markets in Minneapolis and St. Paul.
- See [www.eatwild.com/products/minnesota.html](http://www.eatwild.com/products/minnesota.html)

- See [www.eatwild.com/products/wisconsin.html](http://www.eatwild.com/products/wisconsin.html)
- See [www.localfoods.umn.edu](http://www.localfoods.umn.edu)
- Two excellent websites are: [www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org) and [www.ppnf.org](http://www.ppnf.org)
- A DVD of Sally Fallon's Seminar On Traditional Diets is available at [www.newtrendspublishing.com](http://www.newtrendspublishing.com).

### **Supplements**

- As to supplements, this is a difficult topic in some ways. It is not at all natural to isolate a substance from its source, put it in a capsule, and take it. Part of the issue as I see it though, is that 75 years ago, soil scientists were talking about how the soil was becoming depleted of minerals. Organic farming can help by rebuilding the soil, but the legacy of poor farming practices has left quite a deficit.
- The other issue is a little more difficult. Most traditional people and our own ancestors a few generations ago would eat organ meats freely and regularly. They would make broths from bones and other animal parts. Because of this, their diets were generally much more rich in vitamins, minerals, and good fats. It would be best to learn again how to eat this way, and to use supplements as supplemental rather than as part of our regular diet.

### **Weight Gain and Weight Loss**

- When asked about weight gain and weight loss, what I tell people who ask is this: If you want to fatten up an animal, you feed them grain, especially corn. If you want to fatten up a human, well, feed them starches or grain, or feed them the animals that have been fed grain. And, if you really want to fatten up a human, feed them high fructose corn syrup. It will confuse their appetite mechanism and make them eat much more than they need. It will lead to insulin resistance, which will make anyone fat. And lastly, feed them partially hydrogenated oils, large amounts of omega six oils that have been damaged, and the like so as to create inflammation and insulin resistance.
- So, if you want to lose weight, eat less of the starches - grains, potatoes, pasta, bagels, breads, etc. Avoid corn syrup. Avoid the damaged fats noted above. Eat more good quality fat and protein with your starches, and eat slowly, paying attention to when you are full. Avoid snacking and avoid eating after dinner.
- Lastly, if you want to lose weight, eat 25-30 grams of protein at each meal, or better yet, become adapted to burning fat, and eat a bit less protein and more fat. Your body composition will change toward more lean muscle mass and less fat mass.
- And if you want to put on some weight, keep up the good fats and adequate protein, and add in more of the carbohydrates - grains, potatoes, breads, etc. Do some strength training.

### **Cost of Food**



- One last issue that I would like to address here is the cost of food, specifically the cost of naturally or organically grown food. When I think about this, two basic things come to mind. The first is the total cost of the food and the associated health related costs. Yes, fast food and processed food is “cheap” until you start figuring in the cost of the ill health that follows. The second thing that comes to mind is the thought of laying hens having the same number of square inches as a sheet of paper to live on. Yes, the eggs are cheap, as is the chicken, but consider the overall cost - to the animals we eat, and to our health when we eat a stressed, unhealthy animal, and to our humanity for supporting such a system.
- When we buy “organic” or “natural,” especially if we know the source of the food, perhaps even knowing the farmer that grew the food, we at least have the potential to be buying something that is truly nurturing for us, humanely grown, and sustainable for the land and for the farmer.

### ***Getting Started***

- It is a bit much to think about implementing the above changes given where many of us have started. It takes time to make some of these changes. If you can just start with a few basic changes - making a commitment to avoid the damaged fats and the high fructose corn syrup for instance, you will go a long way toward good health for yourself and your family. Good luck. Keep it simple and have some fun.