

Health and Fitness Excellence

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Eating Healthy

Reinvent your eating habits.



by Jeff Davidson

THE FOOD YOU EAT CAN greatly affect your attitude, aptitude, outlook, activity, and performance. Imagine waking up in the morning feeling well-rested and happy, instead of tired and anxious. Imagine eating a breakfast that is healthy and satisfying, not unhealthy and hurried. Imagine feeling good about what you eat, instead of ignoring your food or regarding meals as a chore to be completed. Imagine feeling good because of what you eat, not in spite of it.

You can reinvent your eating habits so that every meal you eat is part of your self-improvement plan. You can bring the same energy and sense of purpose to your eating that you bring to exercise, career changes, or goals. Your food choices impact the quality and, eventually, the length of your life.

The number of people who get their breakfast from quick-service restaurants has jumped 28 percent in the past decade. And for many people, lunch amounts to stopping at another fast-food restaurant or getting the same kind of food at a cafeteria or convenience store. And then dinner usually brings even more calories, fat, and cholesterol. If you have indigestion after dinner, don't be surprised. Most people just take an antacid. Spending on both over-the-counter drugs and prescription drugs is at an all-time high.

Obesity and cardiovascular disease are also at record levels. Not only does obesity harm your health, it may also cause you to miss work.

The new USDA Food Guide delineates six food groups that are needed in different amounts: 6 to 10 servings daily from the bread and rice group, 3 to 5 servings from the vegetable group, 2 to 4 servings from the fruit group, 2 or 3 servings from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group, and 2 or 3 servings from the meat, poultry, fish, beans, nuts, and eggs group. Note: Servings means only a few ounces. The USDA also advises that you use fats, oils, and sweets sparingly. Move your diet toward this standard.

There are many dietary options—vege-

tarianism, macrobiotic diets, food-combining regimens, ethnic cuisines. As long as you keep basic nutritional principles in mind, feel free to experiment with your options. As you're trying out new dietary options, try buying and eating more organic foods.

For fruits and vegetables to carry an organic label, no pesticides, herbicides, or preservatives can be used in their growing, production, or processing. Organic meats come from animals that do not receive antibiotics and are allowed to roam outdoors. Many supermarkets now carry organic produce.

Going organic could be one of the best things you'll ever do for your health. Organic and non-organic produce are frequently displayed side by side. The organic produce is usually designated by a different kind of sign, label, or sticker. You can find organic processed foods, such as breakfast cereals, canned vegetables, and soups, in health food stores, upscale markets, or the health-food section of a supermarket.

Organic foods sometimes cost more because they are produced and distributed in smaller quantities. Boosters of organic food say it's well worth the higher prices when you consider how much money you could be saving in health care costs down the road!

Another technique to think about is fasting. Many health professionals recommend limited, structured fasting as a way to promote systemic healing.

Many cultures have long regarded fasting as a dependable curative. Modern health practitioners in the U.S. are starting to agree. Fasting allows the organs to empty and rest. This resting period conserves energy and promotes the elimination of wastes and accumulated toxins, which makes the task of cell regeneration more efficient. Fasting could prolong life as a result.

There are two kinds of therapeutic fasting. A water fast means the only thing you ingest is water! This fast induces rapid internal purification, but

it's also a shock to the system. Be careful because most people lack the proper reserve nutrients necessary for a healthy and safe water fast. You may want to consider a juice fast.

In a juice fast, drink natural fruit and vegetable juices to provide a few calories to keep your engine running, essential vitamins to maintain metabolism, and minerals to help your body remove wastes and toxins. Ideally, you would drink at least two quarts of liquid per day, either water or juices, during any therapeutic fast (and preferably more, up to a gallon) to help your body eliminate wastes and toxins.

Many religious traditions, including all of the world's major religions, encourage fasting for various reasons, including penitence, preparation for ceremony, purification, mourning, sacrifice, union with the Divine, and enhancement of the faster's knowledge and powers. Practitioners of fasting often

report that they feel renewed mentally, emotionally, and spiritually after a fast, in addition to the physical benefits.

Most therapeutic fasts last between three and seven days. However, always pay attention to the way your body and mind feel during a fast. If you start getting signals to stop, besides hunger, then stop. There are many books, courses,

and web sites devoted to fasting, so be sure to find a safe, reputable fasting program to follow before you abstain.

You have many dietary choices open to you. If you want answers to your dietary questions, you may wish to consult a dietitian or nutritionist. You can find dietitians and nutritionists by going to the ADA web site (www.eatright.org), the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org), the American Council on Science and Health (www.acsh.org), and the American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org). You could also ask your doctor for a referral.

Start thinking more about diet and nutrition. Seek professional advice or guidance when necessary. Then, develop a plan and stick to it. Measure your progress. Congratulate yourself for your successes, and forgive yourself when you stumble. Above all, be reasonable. ♥

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ACTION: *Develop a nutrition plan.*

