General Nutritional Guidelines

I’ll start this section by summarizing what most nutritionists will recommend for healthy eating: maintaining balance, moderation and having a variety of foods. I am not a nutritionist and this material constitutes general guidelines for maintaining a healthy body and weight.

Remember that obesity is usually associated with high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

The sensible approach to losing weight takes time—and for starters you need to increase your physical activity. If you eat enough of the right foods and exercise, you’ll activate the body’s fat burning mechanism which will maintain your body weight. A well balanced diet will preserve good health and help you cope with stress.

Recommendations:

* + - 1. Eat less fatty foods, less sugar and sweets
      2. Eat more fruits, vegetables, grains and cereals.
      3. Do your best to avoid alcohol which contains lots of calories

**Variety**

The thinking is that the greater the variety of foods you consume, the less likely you will develop a deficiency of nutrients. So—to incorporate a nice variety of foods into your diet, become accustomed to selecting foods from the basic four food groups:

* 1. Meat Group: lean meat, skinned poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, peas, and nuts

(2 or more servings each day)

* 1. Milk Group: lowfat or skim milk, lowfat cheese, lowfat yogurt

(2 to 4 servings per day)

* 1. Vegetable and Fruit Group: citrus fruit and one green or yellow vegetable

(4 or more servings per day)

* 1. Bread and Cereal Group: whole grains

(4 or more servings per day)

**The Importance of Eating Breakfast**

The literature indicates that industrial accidents occur to employees who don’t eat breakfast. Invariably, skipping breakfast results in poor coordination and low blood sugar. If you skip breakfast, you may go for 16-18 hours before eating. The problem is your body expects the metabolic stimulation provided by a healthy breakfast. A diet coke, donut and a cigarette doesn’t constitute breakfast.

Fat and Saturated Fat

Saturated fats come primarily from animal fats and dairy products.

Unsaturated fats constitute vegetable fats—safflower, sunflower, corn and soybean oil are all polyunsaturated fats.

Nutritionists recommend that we consume 30% or less of calories from fat

**Cholesterol**

Cholesterol is carried in the blood by lipoproteins, which is a combination of fat and protein. Research shows that high levels of blood cholesterol increase the chances of heart attack and stroke. Our blood cholesterol level should be under 200mg/dl

To decrease cholesterol, consider the following suggestions:

1. Lose weight if you are overweight
2. Initiate a regular exercise program which will elevate your good cholesterol (HDL)
3. Decrease your intake of saturated or animal fat
4. Increase your intake of unsaturated fats
5. Attempt to decrease your use of alcohol
6. If you smoke, quit smoking
7. Eat less meat, especially red meat and eat more skinned chicken and fish.
8. Eat lean cuts of meat
9. Eat less high fat meat like bacon, pork, sausage and lunch meats.
10. Limit how much butter you eat, shortening, lard, and chocolate.
11. If eating meat—don’t fry-- bake, roast, and boil meat.

**Including Starch and Fiber in Your Diet**

Carbohydrates are one of the major sources of energy for the body. Although protein provides energy—it’s not as much as carbohydrates. There are two kinds of carbohydrates: Complex and Simple:

1. Complex Carbohydrates: these are more nutritious than simple carbohydrates like sugar; and they include starches, vegetables, dried beans and peas, nuts, breads, and cereals. These food items contain many essential nutrients for the body. The more you eat foods high in fiber, the more likely you will not experience chronic constipation and diverticulosis.
2. Simple Carbohydrates: these sources of energy are less nutritious and carry more calories than the complex carbohydrates.

**Include Carbohydrates in Your Dietary Habits**

Carbohydrates remain a major source of energy—and they release serotonin which is a neurotransmitter in the brain that functions to soothe us. As mentioned earlier, sources of carbohydrates are rice, potatoes, breads and vegetables. Research shows that some of these foods, such as a potato, spaghetti or rice contains enough carbohydrates to relieve stress.

**Reduce Your Intake of Sugar**

All of us know that to avoid tooth decay, reduce your intake of sugar. For our purposes, excess sugar intake is associated with high blood fats like cholesterol and triglycerides. Further, excess sugar raises your level of blood sugar. Excess amounts of sugar in your body causes the pancreas to secrete insulin which acts to reduce the high blood sugar. Over time, if your body produces too much insulin, it lowers our blood sugar level and you’re at risk for developing reactive hypoglycemia.

The following are recommendations to avoid excess sugar:

1. Try using less sugar products such as white sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, honey and syrup.
2. Consume less candy, soft drinks, ice cream, cake and cookies.
3. Learn to read food labels to identify the sugar content; avoid sucrose, glucose, dextrose, lactose, and fructose

**Limiting Your Intake of Salt and Sodium**

Sodium is known to be associated to high blood pressure and is a salt containing sodium and chloride. Researchers assert that we eat too much salt in our diets—and that sodium is hidden in food products in the form of a preservative or chemical to flavor food. The following includes recommendations to reduce your intake of salt:

1. Don’t use salt or very little of it when cooking.
2. Only use a little salt to flavor meals.
3. Reduce your intake of foods containing salt—such as prepared soups, potato chips, pretzels, salted nuts, popcorn, cheese, pickled foods, steak sauce and garlic salt.
4. Try using salt substitutes.

**Things to Consider Changing:**

Alcohol - In moderation, alcohol can benefit cardiovascular functioning. However, in our culture, alcohol can cause stress and is used to cope with stress. Alcohol causes the release of the stress chemical adrenaline and may produce tension, irritability and insomnia. It increases fat deposits in the heart and compromises our immune function. Finally, one function of the liver is to remove toxins in our body—and during stress our bodies produce many toxins (hormones). After consuming alcohol, the liver’s ability to filter and remove these toxins is limited. As a result, these toxins circulate throughout the body and damage organs.

Caffeine - it is in coffee, tea, chocolate and other products like Coke and various soft drinks. After consuming caffeine, the body secretes adrenaline which increases stress levels. In moderate amounts, caffeine increases our alertness and activity. However, consuming large amounts of caffeine equates to exposure to long term/chronic stress. If you believe you are consuming too much caffeine, reduce your consumption gradually—otherwise you’ll experience withdrawal symptoms.