Focus On Nutrition

There has been a lot of hype recently in the news, and all over social media about “clean eating,” and the “whole food diet.” These are all variations of similar meal plans, which focus on whole foods and avoid those that are processed.

The basic principles of eating clean involve not only choosing the right foods, but also avoiding junk foods and processed food items that are so readily available. The keys to good health and proper nutrition are in the following principles:

Eat whole foods. Whole foods are those that can be considered straight from the farm: whole fruits and vegetables, whole grains, grass-fed and free-range meats, low fat dairy products, and unsalted nuts, and seeds.

Avoid processed foods. Processed foods are any food that has a label. A label means that more than one ingredient was used to make that food. You don’t have to eliminate all processed foods (like whole grain pasta or natural cheeses), but if a label has more than 5 ingredients you may want to consider purchasing something else.

Eliminate refined sugar. Refined sugar provides empty calories, meaning that there are no vitamins or minerals to promote health. Avoiding added sugar in the diet is one of the easiest ways to improve your health. It is recommended that you consume less than 25-30 grams of added sugar per day, only 6-7 teaspoons.

Try eating five or six small meals a day. By eating smaller, nutritionally dense meals throughout the day you can help fight hunger, or the urge to snack knowing that in just an hour or two you have a more nutritious snack on the way.

Cook your own meals. Instead of buying meals in a box, cook meals from scratch. That’s not as hard as it sounds! Clean, whole foods need little preparation beyond chopping and sautéing to make satisfying, delicious meals you will love.

Combine protein with carbs. When you eat, make sure that what you are choosing is balanced. For the most satisfaction from your meal, combine protein with complex carbohydrates. Protein takes longer to digest, helping you stay full. Complex Carbohydrates provide essential fiber, which helps to maintain satiety, and vitamins and minerals which make them a nutritional powerhouse.

As we come out of the Holiday season, there will be a lot of new diet claims, and fads proclaiming how the product or meal plan is able to “shed pounds fast.” I encourage you to review these principles. Try not to fall trap to these claims, and really try to focus on small, sustainable changes that will become long term habits.

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