

Misconceptions

One of the most important factors in making wise decisions is good information. A misconception is a mistaken idea or view resulting from a misunderstanding of fact. How easy it is to misunderstand basic everyday needs. This is where correct information is crucial. As an illustration, let's look at a single food commodity:

Bread is becoming increasingly popular in countries where it was not eaten a century ago.

The process that makes whole wheat (a whole food) into white flour robs bread of its nutrition. Manufacturers make what they call "enriched flour," in which they replace some of the nutrition they have removed. However, compared with enriched white flour, 100% whole wheat flour provides: 96% more vitamin E, 78% more fiber and magnesium, 58% more copper, 37% more folic acid, 82% more vitamin B6, 72% more chromium, 52% more zinc, 80% more selenium. In addition, 99 plant-chemicals have been found in wheat—nutrients that are not even thought of when white flour is enriched. In all, these plant- or phyto-chemicals are said to prevent or treat 114 disease complications. The vitamins, minerals and 99 phytochemicals in whole wheat produce a combined action that cannot be duplicated by white flour.⁸

Processed foods may appear cheaper but, in comparison with the nutrients lost during processing, whole food is the better nutritional and economic choice. Whole foods are nutritional powerhouses. The complex combination of vitamins, phytochemicals, fiber, minerals, and antioxidants create a nutritional synergy that processed foods cannot replace. Eating whole foods is making the most of every bite.

Change

We all need to take a good look at making every bite count towards good health and nutrition. History and studies the world over tell us that a diet full of whole grains, legumes [beans], fruits and vegetables, with little or no meat and little processed food or sugar, is the best way to make every bite count! The healthiest people on earth do this. Rather than tearing down their health, the foods they eat build it up.

We can even learn lessons from bugs. They know the difference between processed and whole foods. They will always choose whole foods, instinctively knowing they will get little from processed food. Whole food is the better nutritional choice!

Twenty years ago, we (the authors) chose to change our diets. Upon learning how food impacts our health and quality of life, we moved from an animal-based diet to a plant-based one. A plant-based diet is an excellent way to include many whole foods in our diets. We do not struggle with body weight, we enjoy more energy and stable blood sugar levels, and adequate nutrition leaves us truly satisfied. For this reason, we believe whole foods are the highest and most excellent fuel for brain and body.

Body, Mind & Soul

Being truly satisfied is the quest of the heart. We long for deep satisfaction and contentment. Here, too, we can learn from the experience and counsel of others.

Listen to this amazing question. "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? Why do you labor for that which does not satisfy?" Too often we give away, not only our resources and money, but our vitality—our life force—to that which does not gratify our true needs. We've been duped. Consequently, we are never satisfied, never content, and we struggle to sense fullness. "For they eat and yet have not enough"¹⁰ "All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled."¹¹

The Bible says that Jesus "hungered."¹² He had strong desires and needs that were not being satisfied. He understands the feeling. But He also knew where to go to find complete satisfaction. An ancient proverb says, "The righteous eat to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want."¹³ The righteous are simply those who depend 100% on the Life giver, the Source of love, happiness and contentment.

This world is hungry—malnourished from lack and overabundance. We have sought to fill our longing souls with mirages of the real thing, but we have gone away empty. Making every bite count also applies to the spiritual realm—to our soul hunger. When we partake of the Life giver, we will hunger no more. We will find all that we long for. The invitation to experience all that He has provided is for anyone who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. "For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."¹⁴ "He has filled the hungry with good things."¹⁵

¹ <http://www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicle/01/628.01/ChinaStudy11.html>

² Population Research Institute and many biodemographers (see Fries J.F. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1980, 303:131-5).

³ http://www.energywave.com/what_ails_you/diets_and_weight_loss/Okinawan_diet.htm

⁴ <http://www.mediterraneandiet.gr/words.html>

⁵ *Time*, 12/8/03, p. 60.

⁶ <http://www.internet-articles.com/nutrition-exercise/obesity.php>

⁷ *Understanding Nutrition*, Eleanor Whitney (college nutrition textbook), p. 8.

⁸ *A Perfect 10*, Laura Pawlak, PhD, RD.

⁹ Isaiah 55:2.

¹⁰ Hosea 4:11

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 6:7.

¹² Luke 4:2.

¹³ Proverbs 13:25.

¹⁴ Psalms 107:9.

¹⁵ Luke 1:53.



NUTRITION

Making the Most of Every Bite

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Experience is the master teacher; his road was hard and rough. But Wisdom sat back and watched him, and said to watch him was experience enough.
- Richard Bland

Too often we do not take the path of wisdom. To observe and learn from the mistakes and good decisions of others is worthwhile, especially when it comes to promoting the quality of life.

There are valuable lifestyle lessons to be found in various cultures around the world. A quick look at some of the mistakes North Americans make could be educational. Exercise, for instance, has been proclaimed as the single most important lifestyle habit North Americans could include in their daily routines. Yet, while the majority knows this to be true, only 8% exercise on a regular basis. Diet plans and pills (many of which are based on false science) are big business in North America. Yet it has been reported in America, where food is all too readily available, that 66% of Americans are obese. Modern medicine excels in this part of the world, and health foods and health gyms are easily accessible for most. It has never been easier to be healthy in America and yet there is much disease and sickness! Why?

At one time countries living under communistic rule existed in stark contrast. Food was limited and variety was meager. The citizens ate what the government provided. Now, no longer communistic, many wistfully remember how much healthier they were when less was available. Interesting, isn't it?

In this little pamphlet, we will take a brief look at a couple of cultures that have achieved remarkable health and learn from them. We will also address how you can make the most of every bite by implementing positive, life-enhancing changes—thus improving global health one choice, one person, at a time.

More is not always better. Amazingly, some of the healthiest humans live off simple foods (what some may view as an impoverished diet). Whether out of necessity or choice, eating simply of nutrient-rich, plant-based foods often results in superior health. Let's begin with a look at the most comprehensive study of diet, lifestyle and disease ever completed.

The China Study I, conducted some years ago among thousands of rural families in inland China, linked the population's low incidence of such Western health problems as cardiovascular disease, some cancers, obesity and diabetes to plant-based diets that are low in animal products. However, the long-term health benefits to the Chinese and other Asians who have traditionally existed on a mainly plant-based diet is diminishing as they switch to our heavily animal-based, Western-style diet.

The China Study II came about to determine the implications of this eating-pattern shift within the rural areas of China's interior. The adoption of a largely animal-based diet, previously only available to city dwellers, has revealed

the effects of these changes. The author of the study, T. Colin Campbell, stated, "Even small increases in the consumption of animal-based foods were associated with increased disease risk." Researchers have made some interesting conclusions based on these studies:

1. The greater the variety of plant-based foods in the diet, the greater the benefit. Variety ensures broader coverage of known and unknown nutrient needs.
2. Provided there is plant-food variety, quality and quantity, a healthful and nutritionally complete diet can be attained without animal-based food.
3. The closer the food is to its native state—with minimal heating, salting and processing—the greater will be the benefit.¹

Okinawans

Not far from mainland China are the Japanese. On the small island of Okinawa reside some of the longest-lived people in the world. Their death rates from diseases that plague Westerners are some of the lowest recorded. Theirs is a history of aging slowly and of delaying, or even escaping, the chronic diseases of aging such as dementia, cardiovascular disease (coronary heart disease and stroke) and cancer. These people who live well over 100 years are lean, youthful-looking, energetic, and have remarkably low rates of heart disease and cancer, even stomach cancer, which claims many mainland Japanese.²

What do Okinawans eat? The average Okinawan citizen consumes at least seven servings of vegetables daily, and an equal number of grains (most of them whole grains in the form of noodles, bread, and rice). Add to these two to four servings of fruit, plus tofu and other forms of soy, green tea, seaweed and fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids (three times weekly). Sweet potatoes, bean sprouts, onions, and green peppers are prominent in their diet. Vegetables, grains, and fruits make up 72% of the diet by weight. Soy and seaweed provide another 14%. Meat, poultry, and eggs account for just 3% of the diet, fish about 11%. The emphasis is on dark green vegetables rich in calcium. Okinawans, like other Japanese, do not eat much dairy.³

When older folks in Okinawa meet their children and grandchildren after a time apart, their greeting is likely to be, "Are you eating good food?" Eating good food means eating so as to care for your health. When the elders say "food," they don't mean the kinds of delicacies that appeal to taste and sight. Quite the contrary. They mean food good for the body (in the Okinawan dialect, *Kusuimun* means "healthy food with curative powers"). They are encouraging one another to eat foods that will help prevent illness and disease—to make the most of every bite.

Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean Diet has also been studied and esteemed for its simplicity, being based on grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and olive oil. It is considered a more abundant diet because 40% of total daily calories come from fat. Yet the disease risk is significantly lower than other nations whose fat intake is high. The type of fat consumed makes all the difference. Several fats and oils from plant sources have been found to heal,

whereas fats from animal sources damage the body. Eating very little red meat has been observed to increase health.⁴

The above people groups are examples of populations who have existed on simple, native diets focused on what we call "whole" foods (that is, foods as close to their natural state as possible). But as food trends are changing, our global health is also changing in dramatic ways.

For example, one disease that is becoming a global problem is diabetes. "In the next couple of decades, the prevalence of diabetes is expected to triple in Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, to double in the western Pacific and to nearly double in Europe. With an estimated 33 million cases, India has the most people with diabetes; China has 23 million."⁵ Lifestyle is a large factor in the development of Type 2 diabetes. Much of the diabetes explosion can be attributed to eating too much and exercising too little. Imbalanced nutrition and genetic factors influence risk as well.

"In 1997 the World Health Organization officially declared obesity to be one of the most serious health problems facing mankind." Being exceptionally overweight is nothing new to our world. Evidence of obesity was found in Egyptian mummies and in Greek sculpture. It seems that as soon as enough food and leisure are available, people in a society become obese. Whenever food intake exceeds energy expenditure, obesity and resulting health problems will follow. Obesity is associated with increases in Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and other disorders. As a result, it carries considerable public health significance as well as economic repercussions.⁶

Whether for prevention or treatment of diabetes or obesity, we can exercise responsible management of our diet by choosing nutrient-dense, fiber-rich, minimally-processed whole foods.

Choices

Mankind's power of choice is the foundation of a balanced healthy life. Managing your health is a challenge, largely determined by the choices you make. Sometimes, lifestyle choices are limited to basic hunger needs, that is, limited availability of food or limited means to buy food. The consequence of having too little food or too few options results in inadequate intake of important nutrients or even starvation.

Malnutrition has been defined as an imbalance of nutrient intake caused by *either* an under-consumption of nutrients or an over-consumption of energy.⁷ In contrast to the above, those who live in excess (excessive calories, fat, sugar, and refined foods) are just as surely destroying life and health. More food is not necessarily the nutritional answer. One could say in this instance that malnutrition due to excess is caused by poor choices. We are also seeing an increasing presence of either mass-produced or imported cheap foods penetrating the world. Candies, soda, fast foods and overly processed foods are on the rise. Food choices have increased, but so have diseases from nutritionally inferior products. Taking the time to look at your options and being aware of their consequences are important in making wise choices.