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How Important is Nutrition???????

Nutrition is the gas that runs our energy systems, it's the building blocks that virtually builds every cell in the human body, it's responsible for the production of hormones and the development of a healthy immune system. Nutrition is virtually responsible for everything that happens in the human body.

Listed below are the top 15 causes of death in the United States in 1991:

1. Heart Diseases
2. Cancer
3. Cerebrovascular Disease
4. Chronic Obstructive Lung Diseases
5. Accidents
6. Pneumonia and Influenza
7. Diabetes
8. Suicide
9. HIV Infection
10. Homicide
11. Cirrhosis of the Liver
12. Diseases of the Arteries
13. Nephritis
14. Septicemia
15. Atherosclerosis

It can be argued that nutrition can have a major impact on all of the disease states listed above except accidents and homicides. Improper nutrition can be a major cause of heart diseases, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, type II diabetes and atherosclerosis. Several studies have shown that people in the United States have a significantly higher incidence of heart disease, certain types of cancer, cerebrovascular disease, type II diabetes and atherosclerosis than people in other countries such as Japan. What is interesting is that when individuals from these other countries immigrate to the United States their children have a significantly higher incidence of these disease states than their parents. Most researchers believe that this is do to their adoption of a Westernized diet.

What is Nutrition?????

Nutrition is made up of macronutrients and micronutrients. Macronutrients are water, proteins, carbohydrates and fats. Micronutrients consist of vitamins, minerals and conditionally essential nutrients. Vitamins can be further broken down into fat-soluble and water-soluble depending on how they are absorbed and transported in the body. Minerals can be broken down

into macrominerals and microminerals depending on their level of intake and their content in the human body. Conditionally essential nutrients are nutrients that the body can typically make unless the body is under a great deal of stress, or has sustained an injury or illness.

Are Vitamins, Minerals and Conditionally Essential Nutrients Important?

Yes, they are extremely important. Vitamins function as coenzymes (they assist enzymes so those enzymes can speed up chemical reactions), antioxidants and they help to express genes. Minerals function as structural components in the body (i.e. calcium in bones), coenzymes, maintenance of pH, electrolyte balance (some people get cramps when they work out, this can be due to the loss of electrolytes in sweat) and nerve and muscle function. The functions of conditionally essential nutrients vary depending on the nutrient.

My Philosophy

I believe that proper nutrition is extremely important not only to prevent disease, but also to treat nutrient depletion caused by disease. If our body is depleted of nutrients we cannot mount a proper defense and we are left in a weakened state. This makes us more vulnerable to illness. Fortunately in the United States most people consume enough calories, vitamins and minerals to avoid overt nutritional deficiency states, however, we are seeing a rise in various chronic diseases that are effected by our poor food selections. For example, many cardiologists believe that cardiovascular disease is a chronic inflammatory state of the heart. The high consumption of saturated fats in Americans diets causes the body to be in a proinflammatory state and is a major cause of cardiovascular disease. Although various supplements can help with cardiovascular disease as well as other diseases, changes in food selection are first and foremost in any treatment plan. Once this is has been addressed than supplements should be introduced. Other lifestyle modifications should be made as well, such as an exercise program and stress reduction.

Over the last 150 years the human race, especially Americans, have changed their diet radically. During the same time period we have seen a significant rise in chronic disease states. Many of these diseases could be prevented or successfully treated if people ate a diet more closely resembling their ancestors. Below are a few points outlining my philosophy.

- Fat is an extremely important nutrient in our diet. There are several types of fat. Unfortunately, Americans either overconsume certain types of fat or they try to eliminate fat altogether. This can lead to various disease states or subclinical symptoms.
- Overconsumption of sugar is a bigger problem in the U.S. than fats.
- Combining foods appropriately is important to give us enough energy to make it through the day. It also reduces stress on the body.
- Diets don't work, lifestyle changes do.
- One particular food plan is not right for everyone. Over several generations we adapt to our foods. This is one reason why different cultures can consume different types of food without problems while others become sick.
- Foods and herbs are nature's medicine cabinet. Over 25% of prescription drugs are derived from plants.

- Nutritional and herbal supplements are very helpful, but the food a person does or doesn't consume is more important
- Food preparation and cooking are as important as the food themselves. Inappropriate oils and cooking techniques often harm our foods and our bodies.
- Often a person's symptoms are addressed, but the underlying cause is never treated. This is more difficult to address and often takes longer, but the end results are superior.
- A properly functioning gut and liver are necessary for a competent immune system.
- A person should be addressed in a holistic manner. To have complete health the person should be viewed structurally, psychologically and biochemically. This means that other specialists or modalities may need to be included in the treatment plan to ensure its success.
- Nutrition, exercise, stress reduction, proper sleep and happiness are extremely important to achieve and maintain health.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the FDA regulate supplements?

No. This can create problems since some unscrupulous supplement companies, in order to cut costs and increase profits, don't use the highest quality ingredients or actually claim that there are higher levels of nutrients in their product than are actually present. Many reputable supplement companies have their products assayed by an independent third party in order to assure their customers that they are maintaining a strict level of quality control.

Are supplements safe?

Supplements are safe when used appropriately. A qualified health care practitioner should monitor any substance that alters the chemistry of the human body.

Can supplements make-up for a poor diet?

No. Supplements are a good adjunct to a healthy diet, but they cannot replace a poor diet. Nutritional research is in its infancy. Everyday researchers find additional benefits that certain foods provide us as well as negative effects that other foods present to us. Foods contain various substances that we have not yet discovered, therefore, it cannot be provided in a pill.

I exercise/I am young so why do I need to watch what I eat?

Often exercise and youth can give a person the misconception that they are healthy. Exercise, if done appropriately, is an excellent tool to help maintain the health of the body's systems. However, if you don't have the appropriate building blocks than you can't maintain and build muscle mass. The body has multiple energy systems-the phosphocreatine system, fast and slow glycolysis and the kreb's acid cycle. Each system requires different nutrients in order to function appropriately and optimally. If we are lacking these nutrients than we can't achieve our body's maximum potential.

Youth often gives us the false impression that we are invincible. However, diseases start at a much earlier stage than when they are diagnosed. For example, 18 and 19 year-old soldiers who were autopsied during wartime had

already developed atherosclerosis. Women achieve maximum bone density in their mid-twenties. If they don't consume enough of certain nutrients and exercise when they are young than they have an increased risk of osteoporosis. Type II diabetes, also known as adult onset diabetes, is increasingly being diagnosed in children and adolescents.

Whenever I read or watch the news there is so much conflicting information about nutrition so why should I bother to watch what I eat?

It can be confusing getting nutrition information from the media. Many of the news reports conflict with our longstanding beliefs. It is important to understand that one study is not gospel. In order for a study to be accepted by the research community it has to be reproducible. This means that multiple studies have to be performed by different researchers arriving at similar conclusions.

What are the RDA's?

The Food and Nutrition Board sets guidelines for Recommended Daily Allowances for vitamins and minerals. These guidelines were originally established in order to prevent deficiency states such as scurvy (vitamin C), beriberi (vitamin B1) and pellagra (vitamin B3). RDA's are not identical for all people since we all have our own biochemical individuality. In addition, RDA's don't account for individuals with special nutritional needs.

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