



Optimum Function: Nutrition Handout

Strategies for Eating in 2009 and Beyond: Nutritional “Rules” and Guidelines.

For the last 3-4 decades, we have been “forgetting” how and what to eat to be and stay healthy. Our busy lives have obliterated traditions like family meals; our “moms” (this represents anyone who is the primary caregiver in the family) are working “full-time-plus” jobs; often having too little time to learn about nutrition, cooking etc. This has a trickle-down effect because in generations past, we derived much of our knowledge about how and what to eat from our moms, dads, grand parents and community elders.

How can we eat to be and stay healthy? Obviously, the way we are going about doing it is not working, heart disease, diabetes and cancer are on the rise and have been for decades. Many “experts” have erroneously blamed this on “genes”, not fully understanding the implications of their over-simplifications. We now know that food.....REAL FOOD, can turn on or off genes that are coded to produce healthy AND unhealthy states within our bodies. What do we do? Well, here are some strategies to eat in a manner that will help you achieve your health and wellness goals.

Eat every 2-4 hours. You don’t need to eat a full meal every 2-4 hours but you do need to eat 5-8 meals/snacks during the day. This will help nourish you throughout the day, keep you from “caving-in” to temptations that are not healthy AND help you to properly regulate your blood sugar; allowing all the processes in your body happen more efficiently and give you more energy without “crashing” throughout the day.

Eat complete, lean protein each time you eat. Keep your proteins “clean and lean” and eat some with each meal/snack. Note: If you’re a vegetarian, this rule still applies; you need complete protein and need to find non-animal sources. Nut’s seed, organic meats etc are good choices.

Eat vegetables every time you eat. In addition to a complete, clean and lean protein source; you need to eat some vegetables every time you eat (every 2-3 hours). You can toss in a piece of fruit here and there as well. **But don’t skip the veggies!**



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Eat certain carbs only when you deserve to. Eat veggies and a moderate amount of fruit whenever you want. If want to eat a carbohydrate that's not a fruit or a vegetable (this includes things like simple sugars, rice, pasta, potatoes, bread, etc), you can; but you're going to have to EARN IT by waiting until after you've exercised. While heavily processed grains are dietary staples in North America, heart disease, diabetes and cancer are on the rise and linked to the over-consumption of these types of carbs. To reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes etc; earn your starchy carbs. Reward yourself for a good workout with a starchy carbohydrate meal if you're craving these foods and eat them within 1-2 hours of working-out (your body best tolerates these carbohydrates after exercise).

Learn to love healthy fats. There are 3 types of fat – saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated. Forget about that old “eating fat makes you fat” mantra; it's simply not true. In fact, the best way to ensure that your body does not utilize fat as fuel and slows down all of the fat-burning processes in your body, drop your fat intake and increase your carb intake. Eating all three kinds of fat in a healthy balance (about equal parts of each) can dramatically improve your health, **and even help you lose fat.** Your saturated fat should come from your animal products and you can even toss in some butter or coconut oil for cooking. Your monounsaturated fat should come from mixed nuts, olives, and olive oil. And your polyunsaturated fat should from flaxseed oil, fish oil, and mixed nuts.

Avoid the calorie containing drinks (including fruit juice). In fact, all of your drinks should come from non-calorie containing beverages. Fruit juice, more than 1-2 alcoholic drinks, and sodas are all to be removed from your diet. Your best choices are water and green tea.

Avoid lots of fluids with meals. Drinking lots of fluids with meals can compromise your digestion. Sip warm fluids with meals if needed and never ingest cold fluids, as they inhibit digestion. If you drink a glass of water twenty minutes before a meal you will probably find that you won't feel the need to drink during the meal.

Focus on “REAL” foods. Most of your dietary intake should come from whole foods. There are a few times where supplement drinks and shakes are useful but most of the time, you'll do best with whole, largely unprocessed foods. In general, if it comes from a box or has lots of packaging.....it's processed and therefore not “real”.



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Have 10% foods. 100% nutritional discipline is never required for optimal progress. The difference, in results, between 90% adherence to your nutrition program and 100% adherence is negligible. So, “10% foods” foods that break rules, but which you’ll allow yourself to eat (or drink, if it’s a beverage) 10% of the time. Just make sure you do the math and determine what 10% of the time really means. For example, if you’re eating 6 meals per day for 7 days of the week – that’s 42 meals. 10% of 42 is about 4. Therefore you’re allowed to “break the rules” on about 4 meals each week. For most of us (me included), this is great news and makes it MUCH easier to eat healthy long-term.

Develop food preparation strategies. The hardest part about eating well is making sure you can follow these guidelines consistently; this is where developing good preparation strategies comes in. You might know what to eat, but if isn’t available, you’ll blow it when it’s time for a meal. In addition, you need to keep your cupboards and pantries full of good foods, not garbage. You need to have the nice cookware, knives and such to making cooking enjoyable. You need to organize the preparation of each meal so they can take you no more than 30 minutes or so to prepare. During the follow-up appointments in the Precision Nutrition program at Optimum Function; I will go over some of these strategies in more detail.

Balance your daily food choices with healthy variety. Let’s face it, when you’re busy during the week, you’re not going to be spending a ton of time whipping up gourmet meals. During these times you’re going to need a set of tasty, easy to make foods that you can eat day in and day out. However, once every day or a few times a week, you need to eat something different, something unique and tasty to stave off boredom and stagnation. Whenever you choose vegetables to eat throughout the day, “eat from the rainbow”, try and eat a variety of colors; those colors are the signs of important and even life-saving nutrients.

Eat in peace. Distractions such as reading, watching TV, noisy environments and dinner table arguments have very harmful effects on digestion. If you are upset, calm yourself and relax before eating.

Chew your food well. Chewing is perhaps the most important part of the digestive process, so chew more than you think is necessary and avoid swallowing un-chewed food. Rule of thumb: chew once for every tooth you have in your mouth. An adult with a full set of teeth should have about 30-35 teeth.

Eat slowly. Enjoy the flavors and textures of every bite. Enjoy the products of your cooking. Some experts think that this one activity is the reason some cultures with seemingly horrible diets live longer, healthier lives.



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Improve your workout and post-workout nutrition. Bring a protein & carb shake to the gym with you, and sip it before and after your workout. Eat a meal with simple carbs and protein no more than 1-2 hours after working-out.

Eat breakfast; DO NOT SKIP BREAKFAST. This is not up for debate. After not eating while you are sleeping, you need a balanced breakfast of protein AND low-glycemic carbohydrates. This will help to regulate your hunger throughout the day, it will help you properly regulate your blood sugar, and it will replenish some of the nutrients that you need to function well and will improve your overall health. Even if you are not hungry; make yourself eat a little protein and carbs. (A protein shake is great for the times you are in a hurry or workout shortly after you wake-up).

Well, there they are, a set of strategies that will help you improve your eating habits; after all, eating food is as much about nourishment as it is enjoyment and socialization (these are two traits that are becoming obscured by our crazy lifestyles and pre-prepared meals. Now, if you need guidance (because those who normally guide us are busy working/slaving to make a living); I can help you. At Optimum Function, I help you implement “rules” like this and more into your lifestyle in a healthy and enjoyable way. This helps to create or utilize existing nutrition programs and biweekly appointments to:

- Monitor body composition (body fat, lean mass, water weight and more)
- Teach you the details of how, what and when to eat
- Teach you to love and enjoy making and eating delicious, healthy meals
- Encourage and guide you on a physical activity routine that you choose based on what’s out there and my input as a doctor.

For more info on this program, go to www.YourOptimumNutrition.com, email info@OptFunction.com, or call 503-866-9739.

Yours in Health,

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Optimum Function = Optimum Health