



SEVEN SIMPLE RULES TO HELP YOU EAT WELL

RELATIONSHIP

Our relationship with food is not just physical. Food is so important we engage in eating it on a daily basis. Yet we have gradually distanced ourselves from the important relationship we should have with food. Hunting, growing, preparing and actually sitting down and eating food is largely a thing of the past. Now we go to the grocery store, buy what we need, most of the time whatever is going to make life easier is the top choice, and we rarely ever sit down for long, social meals. We've lost the connection with food to the point that most children probably don't understand that a piece of meat actually comes from a living, breathing animal. It's not wonder fast food has become so prevalent. Fast means we don't really have to connect with what we are eating, we can simply order it and shovel it into our mouths. As such we are rarely aware of what is actually going into our bodies. Not so long ago everything we ate was made from scratch and prepared in house. We had a much healthier relationship with food back then. Cooking can be a source of great joy if you engage in it. Following a recipe and preparing food for another person is a great way to reconnect with what you are eating and appreciate what is going into your mouth.

KNOW YOUR GOOD FOODS AND BAD FOODS

Everyone is different and our relationship with certain types of food is also different. What's good for one person may not always be good for another person. Food allergy testing has become quite common over the last decade as a way to identify foods that may not be suitable for your body. Food allergies do not always result in massive anaphylactic responses like someone's reaction to a bee sting or peanuts. Some food allergies lie quietly beneath the surface and affect us in subtle but significant ways. Ineffective digestion, low energy, moodiness and agitation are a few examples of how mild food allergens can affect us. Identifying and removing foods that you are mildly affected by can dramatically improve your overall state of well-being. Just ask anyone who has a gluten intolerance!

AVOID REFINED SUGARS

Refined sugars are everywhere; in fact it's hard to avoid them these days. They are found in most snack foods, most fast foods, most foods that are highly preserved, bread products and most drinks including the energy drinks we consume en masse during training and racing. Refined sugars wreak havoc with your body chemistry especially if you consume great quantities in times of inactivity. Avoiding refined sugars can dramatically improve your well-being.

GOOD FAT VS. BAD FAT

The discussion around fat has been had over and over again yet we still don't seem to get it. We still load our foods with copious amounts of unhealthy fats. This is largely because fat in general makes foods taste better. Restaurant foods are often loaded with fat. Fat holds flavor and fat is very satiating.

To make it easy, there are a few types of fat that are essential to avoid. Hydrogenated, partially hydrogenated and shortening are all harmful types of fat. It will come as no surprise that most good fats can be found in real food sources like avocado, olives and of course fish. Consuming enough good fat is as important as not consuming the bad fat. Essential fatty acids are critical for the immune system, cardiovascular system and nervous system.

READ FOOD LABELS

One of the most important things you can do nutritionally is to become more aware of the foods you are putting into your mouth. Reading food labels is a big step in the right direction. If you do not read food labels regularly you will be amazed at how much “stuff” goes into most processed foods. Reading labels will broaden your knowledge of what is in your food and at least give you the choice of whether or not to eat it.

SIMPLE IS ALWAYS BETTER

If there are ingredients on a food label that you don't understand or cannot pronounce chances are it's some type of preservative or filler. Cookies, crackers, cereal, anything in boxes usually contains vast amounts of these ingredients. Fillers are rarely if ever good. They are usually things like bad fat, refined sugars and preservatives all designed to heighten flavor or make the food last longer than it's supposed to.

“UNPROCESS”

Generally speaking the more processed a food becomes the less nutritional value it contains. Take for example an apple. An apple in its purest form is just that, an apple, hopefully vine ripe so it has had a chance to absorb all the nutrients it requires from the ground. But when we process an apple down to apple sauce we lose part of the whole- often fiber is lost and sugar is added to enhance flavor and preserve the apple. Go one step further and apple juice has lost all but the watery flavor part of the apple save for some vitamins. Take it a step further still and something with apple flavoring has lost everything that resembles an apple except the flavor, this includes all the nutritional value of the apple. A good rule of thumb is to eat foods that have one ingredient. For example, the ingredients of an apple are apple. Stick to foods that exist in their entirety.

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