

Suggestions for Optimizing Nutrient Value of Your Diet

An optimal diet would be a seasonal diet that is free from pesticides and consumed with a relaxed attitude. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world, many of us need to eat on the run or eat prepared meals. By following a few helpful suggestions you can optimize vitamin and mineral intake, and digestion.

1. Fruits and vegetables should be as fresh as possible, with organically grown and pesticide free products being preferable. If vegetable and fruit juices are preferred, those which are freshly prepared are best; but, if refrigerated, those prepared in advance are good up to 48 hours before they begin to lose their vitamin content.

2. Utilize a blender or food processor to help chop fruits and vegetables to help make digestion easier. Nuts and seeds can also be chopped or ground and taken with almond, soy or rice milk, or in powder form. This is especially useful for elderly persons who have a decreased ability to digest.

3. A juicer provides you with an excellent means of maximizing vitamin and mineral intake, as juices are much more easily digested and absorbed. When juicing, do not forget to include the pulp, seeds and leafy parts, as they are also high in vitamins and minerals.

4. Fruits and vegetables, in addition to being high in vitamins and minerals, also provide roughage to maximize bowel function. This decreases the need for laxatives, excessive use of which can lead to an atonic bowel condition and chronic constipation.

5. If taking commercial supplements which are in a tablet form, they will be better absorbed if crushed before ingestion. Liquid or capsulized forms are better absorbed as

less digestion is required. Any vitamin and mineral is better absorbed if taken with a meal.

6. Refined carbohydrates, such as white and brown sugar and white flour, will decrease immune function, put a stress on the pancreas, and possibly predispose one to diabetes, if eaten frequently and in large amounts. They also result in calcium, magnesium and other nutrient loss, which in turn leads to malnutrition, loss of calcium from the bones. This results in a higher incidence of osteoporosis and fractures in the elderly.

7. Protein from fish, chicken, rabbit, nuts, legumes, brown rice, tofu and tempe are generally recommended over red meat sources as they generally contain less fat. In addition, ground beef from fast food establishments is also often very high in salt as well as fat. As a person ages, proteins from white meat sources such as turkey, chicken, eggs, and fish are better utilized.

8. Too much cholesterol in the diet is not good, as is too little. The body makes all of the cholesterol we need and any excess taken in is either passed through the bowel, absorbed and utilized by the body or stored as fat, or in the walls of our arteries. We recommend periodic cholesterol and triglyceride (fats other than cholesterol) checks and a monitoring of your diet to keep them low. High fiber in the diet, from fruits and vegetables, will lower cholesterol as well as keeping your bowels functioning normally.

9. Meal times should be structured so they are eaten slowly in a relaxed atmosphere, and the food should be thoroughly chewed. Soft background music, candle-light, prayer or

meditation, and a eye pleasing presentation of the food and table have all been shown to enhance digestion.

Remember that in nature, foods come completely packaged for optimal digestion. Fruits, vegetables and whole grains contain enzymes, proteins, carbohydrates, small amounts of fatty acids, vitamins and minerals which are packaged by the plant so they can be digested easily. The same occurs with meats and fish, but as they are more susceptible to contamination and disease, cooking is recommended. By consuming processed foods which have been broken down, the body must expend additional energy to re-assimilate the food into a more absorbable form. Thus, less energy is derived from a processed food source compared to a natural one.

Rockwood Natural Medicine Clinic (RNMC) is a naturopathic family practice facility. RNMC was founded in 1991 as a primary care/family practice clinic in Portland, Oregon with a mission was to provide safe, sensible and effective natural medicine for the entire family. In 2000 RNMC relocated the clinic to sunny Scottsdale, Arizona where it is a model for students and physicians to attain further education. Dr. Thomas Kruzel and Dr. Robyn Conte are dedicated to educating and training the next generation of healthcare providers. For more information about RNMC, please visit www.rockwoodnaturalmedicine.com.

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