



A New You Ministry

"Revealing God's Way To A New Life"

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What Is A Good Diet?

Choosing a good diet can be very confusing. Much too often we encounter this person promoting one type of diet, another person another diet; this magazine heralding this weight loss diet plan, that researcher proclaiming his diet is the best; one diet plan calling for only protein and fat, another telling you to only drink shakes. So what should we really eat? With so many contradictions, what is really the best diet? That is exactly what we are going to consider.

There are four basic guidelines or principles of a good, healthy diet. These guidelines outline a nutritious maintenance diet which will promote health for the rest of our lives, as well as form the basis of a therapeutic diet for those who are battling with health problems.

These are the guidelines for a good diet:

- A diet high in complex carbohydrates
- A diet high in fiber
- A diet low in protein
- A diet low in fat

A diet high in complex carbohydrates: Complex carbohydrates are very long chains of various sugar molecules. This should not be confused with the sugar used in candies, cakes, pies, cookies, and virtually all other sweet, desert-type foods. Those sugar molecules are very short and affect the body very differently than the long sugar molecules found in complex carbohydrates.

Complex carbohydrates are very important for the body because they are used as fuel for the muscles and the brain. If the body does not have sufficient fuel (glucose) from complex carbohydrates, it has to try and get fuel elsewhere, which is not nearly as efficient as getting fuel from where it is supposed to get it--complex carbohydrates.

Thus we need an abundance of complex carbohydrates to fuel our various daily mental and physical activities. Athletes and other people who are very active need a predominance of complex carbohydrates for fuel for their muscles.

Complex carbohydrates should make up approximately 70% of our caloric intake. Complex carbohydrates are found in whole wheat bread, brown rice, beans, and in all plant foods in varying

amounts. So next time you feel tired and hungry, look for complex carbohydrates in natural plant foods (not a candy bar, a steak, or coffee) to refuel your body's energy.

A diet high in fiber: Fiber is simply indigestible or partially indigestible plant parts. Thus the only place you will find fiber is in food from plants. Fiber is very important for optimum health because it sweeps the colon clean. Just as in our homes, if we do not clean them often we find a lot of dust and dirt and grime in them. If we do not eat sufficient fiber our colons will become clogged with waste, and worse yet the waste will be absorbed into the body and open the door for various major health problems. Fiber is also very helpful in lowering blood cholesterol levels.

Fiber is especially found in unrefined plant foods such as whole grains, legumes (beans), and various vegetables and fruits. Refined plant foods have much of the fiber taken out, as well as many of the vitamins and minerals that are so essential for optimum health, and thus you do not get the full benefit of the plant food. Examples of refined foods are white bread, white rice, and many prepackaged food items. When a person is on an unrefined plant diet, he or she will usually get sufficient fiber.

A diet low in protein: Protein provides the building blocks for body structure (muscles and tissues) and many body processes (hormones and enzymes). But protein is not a good source of fuel (energy) for the body. Actually most people eat twice as much protein as they should, and this comes in the form of bacon, eggs, cheese, chicken, pork, fish, milk, etc. The problem is that protein from these sources generally alters the blood chemistry and causes calcium to be leached from the bones and promotes its excretion through the kidneys. This produces a prime environment for osteoporosis and other health problems.

We do not need a whole lot of protein because the body recycles much of what it already has. As cells get old and die, they are broken down and many of the components are reused, including the protein. All we need is approximately 10% of our calories as protein. If you follow the first two basic guidelines and you eat a good variety of foods with sufficient caloric intake, you do not need to worry about getting sufficient protein.

Plant foods are wonderful sources of protein without the problems mentioned above. Plant foods especially high in protein include tofu, soybeans, spinach, beans, lentils, and broccoli.

A diet low in fat: Most people already know that too much fat contributes to or causes many health complications; these problems include heart attacks, strokes, deposits in the arteries, obesity, diabetes, and many other health problems. Therefore it is ideal if fat consumption constitutes only about 20% of our caloric intake. The easiest way and virtually the only way to do this is to concentrate on unrefined plant foods.

The best kind of fat is mono-unsaturated fat, which comes primarily from vegetable sources. Olive oil and canola oil are especially high in mono-unsaturated fat. While it is important to have some fat in the diet, fat is not a good primary source of energy. Excess fat hinders proper blood circulation, thus depriving the tissues of needed oxygen and nutrients.

All long-lived, virtually disease-free societies follow the above four principles of a good diet, along with the other aspects of living a healthy lifestyle. Let us learn a lesson from them and use more unrefined plant foods: fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts (including legumes).