



Lady of America Newsletter - August 2009

Eating: "Why Are Processed Foods Bad?"

This is a country obsessed with food. Unfortunately, as South Beach Diet founder Dr. Agatston says, we are an overfed and under-nourished nation. Our grocery store shelves and freezers are stuffed full of processed foods that contain chemically altered ingredients and fillers that are thought to contribute to overeating, increased body fat and diet-related health problems like diabetes and heart disease. Why are processed foods bad? They offer no real nutritional value.



The foundation of healthy living is a sound nutritional diet with healthy meals and exercise. Eating should be enjoyed and you should be able to eat a variety of whole foods in your diet. But for optimum health you need to consider a diet of mostly whole, natural foods. "Whole foods" are those that have not been modified from their natural state, or have slightly been modified through cooking. Foods that have been modified are known as "processed foods."

Eating a diet of whole foods, like nuts, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and lean protein allows your body to process and use the food much more efficiently. Whole foods are high in fiber and nutrient-dense, are more flavorful and much less fattening than processed foods because they don't contain added sugars, sweeteners, additives, preservatives, coloring, flavoring, salt or fats. The more a food is processed, the more of its nutritional value is lost.

It may seem like eating healthily may cost more, but it doesn't. Processed foods can actually cost *more* than natural, whole foods. The key is planning your diet. To best maximize your dollars, preplan a week's worth of menus and healthy meals. Not only does this save time and money, it eliminates multiple trips to the store that result in unplanned spending. Here are other tips to help you eat better without costing you more.

- ❖ Shop with a list and use coupons.
- ❖ Buy in season. When out of season, buy frozen. Often flash-frozen soon after picking, frozen fruits and vegetables can be more nutritious than "fresh" items that have been on a store shelf for a while.
- ❖ Pressed for time? Cook on the weekend so you have healthy meals at your fingertips.
- ❖ Shop at your local farmer's market. Not only are you cutting out the middleman, chances are you will buy more organic foods.
- ❖ Consider buying produce through a food co-op. To get even more savings, get your family, friends and neighbors to share in the order. To find a co-op near you, go to www.localharvest.org/csa.
- ❖ Incorporate more beans in your meals. Beans and brown rice is a sound and nutritious entrée or side dish, as well as a great source of protein and fiber. Add them to salads, soups, chili and pasta dishes. Canned beans are the easiest to use, but for maximum economy buy dried beans.
- ❖ Buy bulk at megastores like Costco, Sam's Club and BJ's.
- ❖ When shopping, stick to the perimeter. The outer walls of a store is where you will find the nutrient-rich, whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, fish, and low-fat dairy, to supplement your diet. The inner aisles contain processed and snack foods.
- ❖ Plant your own garden of vegetables and herbs.

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