



Lady of America Newsletter – March 2010 – Lucky & Charmed

Eating: Choosing the Right Foods for Your Optimum Health

Not all foods are created equal. You should be eating foods that not only satisfy but help keep your energy levels high during the day and help fight disease. That involves a combination of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, whole grains and good fats.



Venture online or wander through the bookstore and you will find a myriad of information on what/how/when to eat. Some plans break the foods down to percentages; other plans tell you what to eat for your blood type, body shape and exercise intensity. Then there's the Mediterranean Diet, the Flat Belly Diet, the Low GI Diet, the Atkins Diet, the South Beach Diet and an endless list of others. And if that wasn't enough confusion, look at the different pyramids available: the USDA Food Pyramid, the Mediterranean Food Pyramid, the Biggest Loser Pyramid and the Harvard School of Public Health's Healthy Eating Pyramid, to name a few. It's enough to make your head spin.

One thing these plans and pyramids agree on is incorporating fruits and vegetables, nuts, healthy fats, lean protein and whole grains into your diet while decreasing red meat and processed foods.

Research continues to show that eating a balanced diet and keeping blood sugar levels steady by eating small healthy meals and nutritious snacks throughout the day provides enough energy for daily activities, including your workout.

"I recommend eating every four hours. These are not full meals but snacks with protein and carbohydrates," recommended Jennifer Vimbor, a registered and licensed dietician-nutritionist and founder of Nutrition Counseling in Chicago. "It's important to fuel well everyday and doing so with a good balance of complex carbs like grains. These provide an immediate release of energy," she continued.

On the days you do exercise, trainers and nutritionists recommend eating a carb within one hour of working out. "Carbs break down quickly, and when you are exercising your body uses that fuel immediately. You want something like a banana or a piece of bread, unsalted pretzels or crackers — something with no more than 5 grams of fiber. If you eat two hours before a workout, I suggest a small snack totaling less than 200 calories that is made up of a protein and a carb," said Vimbor.

Post work-out is just as important as pre-workout, warns Lady of America's fitness trainer, Natalie Brabner. She suggests hydrating with water to replenish what was lost through sweating and eating a protein and a complex carb within an hour after working out. Studies show that refueling within an hour of a high-intensity workout is important in recovery, as it enhances insulin response.

New research also reveals that everyday foods help everyone reach health goals. For instance, blueberries, walnuts and broccoli — known as superfoods — help fight disease. The latest studies show that eating barley, pinto beans, grapes, macadamia nuts and drinking mineral water can help protect the heart. Blueberries, popcorn and bananas are found to help promote digestion while pears, edamame and brown rice have shown to clear the lungs. And by incorporating a MUFA [monounsaturated fatty acids] at every meal, you can target belly fat and bloat.

Let's take a look at the food groups and how they help us. Then you can make smart decisions on what you need and when you need it.

Carbohydrates help keep you energized by maintaining blood sugar levels, and they play a major role in helping your body recover after exercise. The best carbs include fresh fruit, root vegetables (carrots, beets, sweet potatoes) and whole-grain products like brown rice, barley and whole-wheat bread. They deliver vitamins, minerals, fiber and host of phytonutrients.

Protein is an important source of energy and needed to build muscle. Pick proteins that are lower in fat, including lean meat, skinless poultry, fish, beans and eggs.

Dairy supplies the body with zinc, protein, riboflavin, vitamin D and calcium, which helps strengthen bones and may protect against colon cancer and high blood pressure.

Fat is necessary, but you must choose the right fat. For heart-health benefits include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in your daily diet — think olive, canola, safflower, sunflower and flaxseed oil. Eat at least one good source of omega-3 fats each day: walnuts, avocados, canola oil or fatty fish like salmon and sardines.

Fruits & Vegetables are full of fiber, water, vitamins and minerals. They add bulk to your meals with few calories. General rule of thumb: at least 5 servings a day.

MUFAs come from the healthy oils found in plant foods. According to the Flat Belly Diet, "eating one serving of a MUFA at every meal will help reduce the accumulation of dangerous belly fat and help control calorie intake." MUFAS include avocados; pesto sauce; safflower, canola, flaxseed, olive, peanut, sesame, soybean, walnut and sunflower oil; nuts and seeds; olives; semi-sweet and dark chocolate.

Visit www.ladyofamerica.com for additional articles.