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# Healthy Eating Facts You Should Understand

It's really incredible there is anything experts can agree on when it comes to what we eat. It seems like we are inundated with new scientific findings and new diet plans on a daily basis. To make matters worse, it regularly seems as though this information is contradictory. But there are several fundamental dietary principles that haven't altered, nor are they likely to.

Let's begin with calories. A lot of "trendy" diets try to confuse the issue. They talk of "negative calorie" foods, or how certain foods increase metabolism and help burn fat. However, everything comes down to this: calories are energy. Therefore, if you wish to lose weight, then you have to consume less calories than you burn.

If you want to gain weight, then you do the opposite. Also, should you limit your caloric intake too much, your body will go into starvation mode, and will burn off calories extra slowly because it thinks there is a scarcity of food, this makes it more difficult to lose weight (if that's your goal). So, that means you shouldn't restrict food intake too much, but rather eat smarter.

Another significant feature of calories is that all of them should count. That does not mean you should count every calorie to the point of obsession. What it does mean, however, is that all of the calories you consume should provide nutritional value, or that they should count for something. This means getting rid of any empty calories. Certainly one of the largest sources of empty calories are sweetened soda drinks. These are loaded with sugar and have zero nutritional value. In fact, one non-diet can of soda contains as much as 160 calories. Imagine if you were drinking four of them per day, they would constitute an extra 640 calories, none of which are doing anything to satisfy your hunger or provide nutrients. Another example is fruit juice... yes, fruit juice! 'But that's healthy and full of vitamins' I hear you say... you're correct, but it's better to eat the fruit than drink the juice because that will satisfy both your appetite AND your thirst! Whereas the juice will only satisfy thirst and is almost as high in sugar and calories as non-diet soda.

Now let's examine the fat in our diets. It was relatively recently when food producers decided to provide low-fat variations of many different products. This was with the desire of capturing a piece of the health conscious market. While it is a fact that fat contains 9 calories per gram compared to protein and carbohydrates which only have 4 calories per gram, not all fats are the same.

For example, it's generally acknowledged that there is no healthy amount of trans fats; therefore you should do your best to completely eradicate them from your diet. Saturated fats are also unhealthy, but if you limit intake of them your body is able to deal with them. Then there are the two different types of beneficial fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Although you can't consume these without considering their impact, if you are going to be consuming fats (and you do need some), then these are the better choices. Then of course you have essential fatty acids which are worth mentioning here, they're not fats per se but they are certainly healthy and help control blood cholesterol levels. Rich sources of these include salmon, sardines, tuna and other type of fish and shell fish. This is one of the reasons that nutritionists recommend you consume at least two serves of fish per week.

So all eating really comes down to those two basic things: calories and fat. What diet plan you follow doesn't matter so much as how you eat. Therefore, when choosing a diet plan, ensure that it takes a sensible approach. When you do that, you'll not only feel better about being on a healthy eating plan, you will also be much more likely to stick with it.

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