



Nutrition Know-How

WORK YOUR WAY THROUGH THE FOOD CHAIN TO FIND THE BEST NUTRITIONAL CONTENT.

Article by Cheryl Fenton Hendrick

WATCH THE CALORIES. Watch the fat intake. Watch the carbs. With all of these rules and regulations about your body's nutritional needs, sometimes it seems a person can watch herself go crazy. Food should be a source of vitamins and minerals, not frustration. With just a little know-how, you can have a plate full of fabulous food and a body full of energy and nourishing nutrients—hassle-free.

"Overall, if you have a well-balanced diet, everything should fall into place," says registered dietician and fitness consultant Marianne Scuccimarra. "If you're lacking in one area, another area suffers. Everything overlaps."

To begin, look to the pyramid. No, we're not being cryptic. Scuccimarra, along with many nutrition experts, recommends following the Food Guide Pyramid supplied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Daily, that means six to 11 servings of bread, fortified cereal, rice and pasta; three to five of vegetables; two to four of fruits; two to three of milk, yogurt and cheese; two to three of meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts; and sparse use of fats, oils and sweets. (see below)

"This guideline is the best, and it hasn't changed through the years. Everything you need every day is covered," says Scuccimarra. "And as long as you have enough of it, you should have a well-balanced diet."

It seems like a lot of food, but this is one case where

size does matter. "Serving sizes are small on the pyramid, so it may seem like a lot of food, but it really is just right," she continues. "There is a low range and a high range of the pyramid based on serving sizes. Tailor it to your lifestyle. [Also,] if you work out five to seven times a week, you may need more of everything."

Basically, Scuccimarra says, it all comes down to one simple rule: Color is where it's at. "The more colorful the food, the more benefits you get from it," she says. "As long as your plate looks good and it's colorful, go for it." Just remember we're talking color supplied by nature—not chemicals. Bright orange cheese puffs, for example, don't count!

Fiber Source: grains, barley, brown rice, apples, whole wheat pastas and breads, roughage such as lettuce, kidney beans, supplemental mixes such as Benefiber

Turns out that being regular is more than just that. Along with the regularity that fiber promotes comes a decreased risk of such diseases as diverticulosis (the condition that results from "pouches" forming in the large intestine) and a lower risk of colon cancer. Ready for an added bonus? Weight loss.

"Fiber acts as a sponge in your stomach. When you [consume] it, it causes you to have the full feeling," notes Scuccimarra. "It also helps you excrete everything and acts like a healthy detoxifying magnet." The American Dietetic Association recommends 20 to 35 grams of daily fiber. Check out www.benefiber.com for more information about Benefiber's new, non-gritty fiber supplements. Easy to work into recipes and your lifestyle, the mix is taste-free and 100 percent water-soluble. Finally!

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Iron Source: shellfish, lean meats like beef, liver, sardines, cooked dried beans, spinach, fortified cereals

Young African Americans, teenage girls and women of childbearing years, lend us your ears. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the most common reason for anemia is iron deficiency, and you are the most at risk. The primary problems of anemia are reduced red blood cells and hemoglobin production, hemolysis of red blood cells and loss of blood. The recommended daily allowance of this important mineral is 10 to 15 mg per day.

Folate Source: carrots, cereals, green leafy vegetables, legumes, fruit, enriched foods with folic acid, a synthetic version of folate

Talk about a house of cards. A deficiency in folate will cause a deficiency in iron, which results in a decrease in red blood cells, which leads to anemia. Doctors recommend that pregnant women and those who are considering pregnancy load up on this nutrient because of its ability to reproduce red blood cells and tissues. This aids in the prevention of several birth defects. Even those of us not considering pregnancy should reap the benefits of folate.

Calcium Source: dairy products, broccoli, dark green leafy vegetables, fortified fruit juice, sardine bones, almonds, tofu (if made with calcium sulfate)

You heard it as a kid, "Honey, drink your milk." Your mom was giving you sound advice. If you don't have enough calcium in your diet, you may need to ask yourself in the future, "Got Osteoporosis?" Says the Center for Disease Control, osteoporosis is a disease of the skeletal system characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue. Calcium is integral for healthy bones, but also strong teeth and proper function of the heart, muscles and nerves. According to the National Institute of Health, women ages 25 to 50 need 1,000 mg. per day. That's four to five cups of milk each day, so drink up! You may want to consider foods that are fortified with calcium or supplements so you're sure to get your day's worth.

Antioxidants Source: colorful fruits and vegetables, green teas, vitamins, sweet potatoes, dark green vegetables

Nutrients, such as vitamins C, E and carotenoids (a

form of vitamin A), are called antioxidants. They can help slow down, prevent or repair damage that occurs as our cells age. "There are free radicals in the air, and you need to fight them off," says Scuccimarra. "If we didn't have antioxidants in our bodies, we would get more infections."

Vitamin C can reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and cataracts (by a third, according to a study from Tufts University on supplements). Your body will thrive from this vitamin in citrus fruits, supplements (try the yummy flavored Hall's drops), papayas, oranges and

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Serving Size Matters

Servings sizes according to the Food Pyramid

Grains 1 slice of bread ■ ½ cup cooked rice or pasta ■ ½ cup of cooked cereal ■ 1 oz. of ready-to-eat cereal

Fruits 1 medium apple, banana or orange ■ ¾ cup fruit juice ■ ½ cup of chopped, cooked or canned fruit

Vegetables ½ cup vegetables (chopped, raw or cooked) ■ 1 cup leafy raw vegetables ■ ¾ cup vegetable juice

Milk, yogurt, cheese 1 cup milk or yogurt ■ 1.5 oz. of natural cheese ■ 2 oz. of processed cheese

Meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, eggs and nuts ½ cup cooked beans, 1 egg or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter count as 1 oz. of lean meat ■ 2 to 3 oz. of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish

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strawberries. The minimum recommended level is 75 milligrams for women, but 200 mg is more like it...2,000 mg/day can cause intestinal upset, so too much of a good thing is not always a good thing.

Vitamin E may help ward off colon cancer and protect you against Alzheimer's disease. The expert recommended daily dose is around 225 mg per day for full disease-fighting benefits. Supplements are your best bet, because vitamin E is found mostly in foods high in polyunsaturated fats, like vegetable oils, nuts and margarine.

Beta-carotene, the most familiar carotenoid, is found in deep orange or dark green produce. Known mostly for helping with eyesight, it may also reduce breast cancer risk. Find another carotenoid, lycopene, in tomatoes, tomato juice, watermelons, guavas and even ketchup. It'll help cut your risk of heart disease and cancer.

Potassium

Source: bananas, potatoes, strawberries, cantaloupes, tomatoes, ice cream, fruit juices

You know that leg cramp that woke you up at 3 a.m.? Instead of a painkiller, perhaps you should reach for a banana. Potassium aids in muscle contractions; cramping may occur when there is a deficiency. And, remember, one of the biggest muscles in your body is your heart.

Overall, experts agree that people need to be more aware of what their diets lack. Just because you feel full after a meal doesn't ensure you've gotten the nutrients your body needs. Work with your doctor or certified nutritionist to make sure you're eating a well-balanced diet and getting the vitamins and nutrients needed to feel and be your best. ■

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the area where they have a deep scar and you can actually graft it into the area. It works very well for some of the deeper scars in skin of color." While this may not be suitable for someone with very shallow or minimal scarring, techniques like these can literally save face for countless others.

Dr. Baral treats many clients with the high-tech tool known as the Cool Touch Facial Rejuvenation Laser that uses a cryogen spray to cool and protect the sensitive skin surface and nerve endings while treating deep beneath the surface. With an average of three treatments, acne scars can be reduced considerably. ■



MODELS: MEGAN SHUPERT/NEW VIEW MODEL MANAGEMENT; KAREN MULLINS/HEYMAN TALENT; DEONSA DUCKSON; CHRISTINE BUI; CHARLIZE THERON BY KEVIN MAZUR; LUCY LIU BY STEVE GANITZ; TALISA SOTO BY JIM SPELLMAN; BRANDY BY THEO WARGO/WIREIMAGE.COM

Shun the Sun

ACROSS THE BOARD, doctors agree: Sun exposure is the number one cause of premature aging. Early prevention, in the form of sunscreen or sun avoidance, is the best defense. For those who don't take heed or have already realized the damage, there are cosmetic treatment options. Studies have shown that more and more women are seeking out cosmetic surgery procedures to reduce the signs of aging. Another option that has a devoted following of late is Botox, a chemical used to paralyze certain facial muscles, preventing further lines from forming and existing lines from becoming more pronounced.

Whatever your age and whatever your skin type, one thing is clear. Now is the time to take good care of your skin so you can look and feel your best. Addressing your concerns with a doctor or specialist is most important to getting the results you desire.