



## Healthy Eating Habits

# Eat Right

### *“You are what you eat.”*

Research studies continue to support this statement. What we eat and drink has a significant impact on not only our blood sugar and cholesterol, but also on levels of inflammation, risk of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cancer, and even on your mood. The hyper-palatable, ultra-processed foods we eat everyday are convenient and tasty, but they are also potentially harmful and addictive. If they form the bulk of our diet, they can wreak havoc on our health.

### *So, what do we do?*

Science has been pointing for many years to the benefits of a whole food, plant predominant diet. Whether looking at animal studies, large population studies, or those of factors that allow people to live healthy into their 100's, it is a plant-based diet that outpaces others in terms of decreased inflammation, lower rates of obesity, and longer life spans. If we look at our ancestors, even the hunter-gatherers ate a largely fiber-rich, plant predominant diet. There were lots of roots, berries, and other plants that led to an average intake of over 100 grams of fiber a day, compared with the paltry 16 grams per day of the average American.

### *Why is fiber important?*

Other than reducing constipation, fiber is an essential part of supporting a healthy gut microbiome. Plant fiber from whole fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and nuts increases the levels of more beneficial bacteria in our gut, which then process the fiber into short chain fatty acids, which reduce inflammation in our bodies, and naturally help to curb our appetites (without having to take injections or suffer the side effects of expensive medications). In addition, plants come packaged with vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients; the compounds which give plants their vibrant colors. These compounds have anti-inflammatory effects and lower our risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and can even boost our mood.

### *Examine your diet.*

On the other hand, the standard American diet (SAD diet) is high in fat, sugar and salt, and has the fiber and healthy phytonutrients processed out to increase shelf life. The most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends about 2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables per day. Ideally this would be closer to 7 servings per day. Our bodies would thrive with this dietary change, in addition to whole grains, legumes and nuts. Food intolerances and allergies may limit some individuals, but there is so much variety in the plant kingdom that there are still many healthy alternatives to choose from. Some people worry that they won't get enough protein if they eat mostly plants. However, a rich variety of plants, including beans, nuts, legumes, and even vegetables, provides more than enough protein for our daily needs.

*So let's “eat the RAINBOW” of the beautiful, rich variety of plant foods.*

### *Resources:*

American College of Lifestyle Medicine  
Nutrition Facts  
Full Plate Living

<https://lifestylemedicine.org>  
<https://nutritionfacts.org>  
<https://www.fullplateliving.org>

