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SOME GENERAL DO'S AND DON'TS OF FOOD AND COOKING

As every body is unique, there will always be variations according to individual needs. A few basic guidelines, however, are appropriate as we seek a way of eating that creates balance and harmony. Frame of mind is of utmost importance at mealtime; relax and slowly chew your food for optimal digestion and assimilation. The dinner table is not the place to discuss the day's problems. Chewing is a major part of digestion. Remember that your stomach does not have teeth. The more you chew the greater the surface area and the easier it is to digest the food. Digestion, particularly of the starches, begins in the mouth due to the enzyme amylase and continues in the stomach, as long as the pH is mildly acidic. Foods that are difficult to masticate, such as sesame seeds, should be ground before eating. Do not space meals too far apart or too close together, generally 2 - 4 meals per day are enough. Try to eat in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere not when you are angry, emotionally upset, working, watching TV, etc.

There are many ways to prepare foods: raw, sprouting, steaming, stir-frying in water, stewing (light boiling, as in soups), baking or broiling. Each of these methods has their time and place for each individual person (bio-type). If oil is desired put it on after the food is cooked. Even the best quality oils become hard to digest or even toxic to the body when heated. Foods should be eaten in their wholeness, when possible. Peel fruits or vegetables only if the peel is hard to digest or contaminated with chemical sprays. Search out organically grown foods to avoid the toxic chemical residues of commercial the growing processes. To clean foods thoroughly, wash them in salt water or a diluted solution of hydrogen peroxide. Also avoid irradiated foods and microwave ovens as much as possible.

There are three main thought processes you have to consider with nourishment and food.

1. What, When, Where, and How you eat.
2. How you prepare your food.

Remember the most important thing is the actual nourishment you absorb from your food and drink.

1. As a general rule breakfast and lunch should be your largest meals, and should also have a moderate amount of protein, depending on your metabolic and blood type you may need more or less. Breakfast and lunch should provide you with the most energy for the day when you are active. Have a medium dinner for the less active night, (especially if you're trying to loose weight). Also according to Oriental Meridian Energetic, the Stomach and Pancreas energy are highest between 7-11 am and lowest between 7-11 pm. The Large Intestine energy is highest between 5-7 am, this is when you would typically have a bowel movement.
2. Chew your food well, at least 25-50 times, depending on the type of food. This will greatly increase the surface area of the food, which makes digestion much easier and less energy consuming, especially if you tend to get tired after a meal, have digestive problems, or see undigested food in your stool.
3. As every body is unique, there will always be variations in your diet according to your individual needs. Some people need a high protein and vegetable diet while others need high complex carbohydrate and vegetable diet. If you know your blood type you will get a paper that shows you the foods that your body/blood type reacts to positively and negatively. You will also get a form to fill out to help determine your metabolic type.
4. Drink very little fluids just before, during and approximately 1 hour after your meals. The excess fluid will slow the digestive process down by diluting the digestive enzymes and hydrochloric acid. Digestion is one of the most energy consuming processes of the body and the excess fluids will increase this even more. This will eventually weaken the whole body by weakening your ability to break down and assimilate your food. Note: Yogurt labels must state on the

label: "with active yogurt cultures," "living yogurt cultures," or "contains active cultures." If a yogurt label doesn't say this, then assume that the bacteria in that product are dead!

5. Drink most of your fluids (water) between meals. A good general guideline to determine if you are drinking too much or too little water is to count the number of times you urinate in twenty-four hours. Note the color and clarity of the urine. If you urinate between 3-5 times per day and the urine color is straw yellow or lighter (note: vitamins can make your urine turn bright yellow so don't take that into account) and it is not cloudy, then you are drinking enough fluids. Remember drinking fluids isn't the only way you get water. If you eat any vegetables or fruit they have a lot of fluid. Also all grains and beans are cooked in water and absorb a lot of it in the process which you take in.

6. Try not to snack between meals. Most snacks are junk food and we tend to consume them without thought or need. We usually aren't hungry when we do snack, it is just something to do while we are watching TV, reading, studying or socializing.

7. You should stop eating approximately three hours before you go to bed or before 7pm if possible. Do not have a late night snack, as this will start the whole digestive process going again when you should be sleeping and the liver should be cleaning the blood. This is a very important function.

8. You should eat a wide variety of foods for good balance. This does not mean that in one meal you should have three different grains, five different vegetables, fish, etc. It would be better to have one grain, one legume, and two or three different vegetables at a meal and then at another meal have a different grain or, legume and one or two different vegetables. This is what is meant by a wide variety of foods.

9. Foods and drink should rarely, be eaten or drunk cold. This weakens the digestive system due to the excessive energy needed to warm the food or drink before digestion can occur. In Oriental Medicine the stomach is like a stewing pot and the Spleen/Pancreas is the fire below it. If you put cold water into a boiling pot it will stop the boiling and consume much more energy to heat it back up in the process. Since we get our energy by breaking down and assimilating our food, this will only decrease our net energy increase. Eventually this will weaken the digestive system so that we have chronic digestive disorders that we think are normal because "I always feel this way when I eat" while all that time you have been assimilating less and less from your food. This gets even worse when the quality of food also decreases, such as fast foods, rich and sweet food, and even raw foods. This is why soups and broth's are one of the best foods for sick and very weak people. They have already started the "Stewing Pot" in the stomach, which makes it much easier to digest and assimilate. Even if some of the nutrients are lost, the net effect is increased absorption overall.

10. Have your fruit between meals. If fruit stays in the stomach too long fermentation will begin, causing a fullness sensation and gas, and inhibiting the normal process of digestion. Fruit should be eaten in small amounts because of the high amount of sugar, (of which most people get more than enough) and the low nutrient value compared to vegetables. Although this is a "natural" sugar it can still cause a severe fluctuation in blood sugar, even with people that have borderline hypoglycemia. This quick increase in blood sugar levels from fruit happens because the digestive system has become inefficient in regulating the blood sugar levels due to excessive intake of refined sugars in our everyday life, which has made fruit an extreme food when it should be a nourishing and energizing food.

11. Whole vs. Processed: Choose whole foods; that is, foods intact with their bran and fiber. Simple carbohydrates such as white flours, white sugar, etc. are devoid of any real nutritional value beyond simple starches and cause numerous health problems. This extends beyond grains: hard cheeses over-processed cheese; certified raw milk over-homogenized and pasteurized milk products; fruit over fruit juices; real potatoes, grains, hot cereals over their "instant" counterparts.

12. Fresh vs. Frozen vs. Canned: Fresh is the best choice. If you find buying fresh produce is inconvenient, either for reasons of food preparation time or spoilage issues, find a store with a salad bar or deli. Check to see if the produce is organic (preferred) or preserved with sulfites (not preferred) or other methods to retard browning. Ask the store management for such options if they do not already exist. Frozen products can be a wise choice and are superior to canned products. When buying frozen products, read the labels and choose the product with the lowest sodium content, and avoid any "extra" ingredients.

13. Freshly ground/milled vs. shelf goods. If possible buy grains, nut butters, coffees, herbs, etc. freshly ground. Better yet, buy your own grain mill, coffee mill, nut and seed grinder, mortar and pestle and grind your own. Always refrigerate or freeze and protect from sunlight such items to retard oxidation.

14. Organic vs. sprayed produce: It makes good sense to avoid added herbicides, insecticides, fumigants, artificial dyes and colorings. Organic produce may be more expensive but it is well worth the investment. Try to carefully plan your meals to avoid waste. Take advantage of seasonal crops at their peak when prices are low and quality high. If good quality organic produce is not available to you, ask the management of the store you patronize to supply organic foods. Start your own organic food-buying club or look for one to join.

15. Local vs. imported produce: Imported produces from other states or countries require large amounts of fuel in transport, and pesticides banned as unsafe in the U.S. are often still used abroad. When in season support your local growers. Farmer's markets are a joy to attend. Find out if your community holds a regular event (In the Oaks Mall parking lot on Thursday, late afternoon). Plant a garden yourself, and if possible freeze and can the harvest. Start a cooperative garden in your neighborhood or swap bumper crops among your gardening friends.

16. Range-fed animal products vs. factory-raised: Cattle feed lots and poultry farms are undesirable sources for animal products, for humane and health reasons. Chickens that run free and forage for themselves produce better quality eggs than chickens crowded together and fed antibiotics and hormones. Call your local County Extension, agricultural department at a nearby university, or USDA branch for possible suppliers. Check the farmers' market or local whole foods store. Visit your supplier and ask to see the animals.

17. Whole Grains: Most of the grains should be in their whole form, such as brown rice, barley, millet, buckwheat, tritical, oat grouts, instead of white rice, pearled barley, etc. Refined breads should be the smallest portions of grains. Whole grain flours are much more nourishing. The preferred breads are made from sprouted whole grains. These should be the predominant forms of floured products besides whole-unprocessed spaghetti, macaroni, etc. All grains should soak for 12 hours or over night, (especially if you have any digestive problems,) then pour out the water and rinse with clean water before cooking. Since sprouted grains are much easier to digest you can continue the rinsing phase for 2-3 more times in the next day and they will start to sprout. When you cook grains they should be soft. If there is weakness of the digestive system, then they should be cooked until soupy. The whole grain is preferred over the flaked, rolled or floured grains such as Oatmeal, Couscous, Bulghar.

18. Vegetables should be cooked to some extent, (at least 25 to 75% of the time depending on the time of year and the person's overall condition), i.e., soups, steamed, baked or stir-fried; preferably in water. The decrease in nourishment of some vegetables from cooking is more than made-up by their increased digestibility. Seaweed is a vegetable that most people don't eat or don't even know about, which is extremely nourishing and easily added to soup. If you have a juicer you can juice some vegetables two to four times a week. Green leafy vegetables are the most desirable and only organic vegetables should be used, and the fiber from them should be used in cooking because the fiber is one the most important aspects of vegetables.

19. Legumes should be soaked in water for 12 hours. Pour out the water and rinse with clean water and pour out. Rinse 2 more times within the next 12 hours or until they begin to sprout. This helps reduce the carbohydrate that produces most of the gas, because the bean utilizes it for its growth. Also the vitamin content of the bean increases in the sprouting process and the carbohydrates are broken down into simpler carbohydrates that are easier to assimilate. The soaking water should be discarded one to two times in the soaking process (preferably to water your plants) and fresh water added. Before cooking, discard the final soaking water and cook until soft. This will also increase the digestibility and decrease the amount of starch that causes gas.

20. Herbs and spices that assist digestion of beans:

Coriander, Cumin, Ginger -- Lentil, Mung, Black, Azuki

Sage, Thyme, Oregano -- Black, Pinto, Lentil, Kidney

Dill, Basil -- Lentil, Garbanzo, Split Pea

Fennel, Cumin -- Pinto, Kidney

Mint, Garlic -- Garbanzo, Lentil

21. All meats, fish, and poultry should be as fresh as possible, without any hormones or antibiotics or heavy metal intoxication, and as lean as possible. Meat should be cut into small pieces before chewing or pounded before cooking for easier digestion.

22. FISH: Whole fish will not smell "fishy" if it is fresh. Shark and skate are exceptions to this rule, as they naturally have a slight ammonia odor when fresh. The eyes will be clear, not cloudy, and the skin will be moist and shiny but never slimy. The scales should be intact and attached, instead of dry or flaking. Cuts of fish should be moist, with no fishy odor, bruises, odd-colored edges, or spots. Frozen fish is harder to evaluate, unless you notice any discoloration or a strong odor. Look for intact packaging, recent date codes, and a piece of fish that feels frozen solid. Avoid pieces covered with a lot of ice crystals, an ancient date code, or rips and holes in the packaging. Shellfish such as Crab and Lobster are best purchased live and cooked to order, Shrimp can be frozen, preferably with shells on. Clams, Oysters and Mussels should always be purchased live.

DID YOU KNOW that many markets sell fish that has been dipped in a solution of chlorine and water to retard spoilage?

23. Fats as a whole should be uncooked polyunsaturated and monosaturated fats (preferred). There are two Essential Fatty Acids, grouped as Omega 3: Sources: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA): cold water fish (salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines); cod liver oil (caution: can develop vitamin A toxicity if using a product with vitamin A). Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA/LNA): flaxseed (linseed) oil, soy oil, and chloroplasts. Omega 6 linoleic acid (LA); Sources: vegetable, nut and seed oils: corn, safflower, soy, canola, sunflower. Gamma-linolenic acid (GLA): breast milk, evening primrose oil (EPO), black currant oil, and borage oil: these are very important to get in your diet especially for infants and young children for brain and nervous system development. Olive and Corn oil are probably the best cooking oils!

WARNING! Oil pesticides, which are very fat-soluble, tend to be concentrated in oil products. Therefore, it is a good idea to buy organic oils whenever possible.

Oils especially high in pesticide residue are soy, corn, cottonseed, and canola. Store oils in the refrigerator, tightly capped away from light. Buy oils in small quantities and use before they become rancid.

All unsaturated fatty acids, polyunsaturated or monounsaturated are subject to oxidation and rancidity, (monounsaturated less so.) Protect your oils from air, light and heat. Look for oil that is organic and cold pressed, not cold processed or solvent extracted. Ideally, the oil should be in an opaque bottle. Buy smaller quantities, amounts you can use, before they become rancid. Keep your oils in the refrigerator. Avoid frying at high heats. Use water with oil while sautéing to keep temperature (and calories) down. In small quantities butter is superior to margarine, which is an artificially hydrogenated product with trans-fatty acids.

24. Nuts & Seeds: It is preferred to buy nuts and seeds in the shell if possible and store in cool dark place. When shelled, store in a glass jar in a cool/cold dark place. You could also lightly roast them to improve digestion and storage.

25. Water. Filtered water is superior to tap water. Investigate the various water filtration devices and choose one that makes the most sense for your household. To extend the life of your filter, let tap run a few minutes in the morning or whenever water has been sitting in the pipes a long time before turning on the filter. Collect the run off water for plant watering and dish washing.

26. One's diet should follow the seasons, eating what grows locally. Nature has the perfect plan in providing the appropriate foods for the given season. The fruits and vegetables that ripen in the summertime tend to be on the cooling side, because their growth period occurs during the cooler months. In wintertime we will tend towards a warming diet.

27. Glass, stainless steel, or earthenware is the best utensils for cooking. Aluminum and copper are the worst because these metals can easily leach into the food.

28. Miscellaneous Foods: Apple Cider vinegar, Anise, Arrowroot, Basil, Carob, Cinnamon, Fennel, Ginger, Honey, Kuzu, Lecithin, Miso, Molasses, Olive, Rice vinegar, Tofu, White fungus, Salt, WATER.

29. If you do drink coffee (not recommended), buy the best quality organic bean you can find. If you drink decaffeinated, opt for water processed over solvent extracted which may have leftover organic solvent residue. Consider the country of origin of the bean. Examine the method of brewing as well. French press is better than paper cone filters, and paper filters better than automatic coffee makers or percolators.

FOOD COMBINATIONS

Below is a strict representation of food combining which is usually not needed for everyone and will be modified for each individual.

Eat protein foods first because they require a lot of stomach acid to digest properly. Any starches eaten first will tend to reduce the amount of stomach acid and thus the digestibility of protein. Examples of protein are all animal products, legumes and their products (tempeh, tofu, miso), nuts, and seeds.

Green and non-starchy vegetables combine well with all proteins, fats, and starches.

PROTEINS: Legumes (dried beans, lentils, peas), and their sprouts, seeds, tofu, tempeh, miso, soy sauce; all meats, fish, eggs combine best with green and non-starchy vegetables. An exception is that high-fat proteins also combine with acid fruit. Protein foods are best eaten before starches and fats. At most, eat two proteins per meal.

HIGH-FAT PROTEINS: Nuts, oil-bearing seeds (flax, sesame, etc.), dairy products. Follows the above rules.

FATS & OILS: Avocado, butter, cream, olives, sour cream, oils (olive, sesame, flax, ghee, etc.), Combine best with green and non-starchy vegetables, starches, and acid fruit. Eat in small amounts.

STARCHES: All whole grains and their sprouts, including bread, pasta, and sprouted grain flours; beet. Carrot, pumpkin, parsnip, potato, sweet potato, winter squash, Combine best with green and non-starchy vegetables, and are best eaten after protein foods. At most two starches per meal.

LEAFY GREEN VEGETABLES: Bokchoy, cabbage, chard, beet, collard and mustard greens, kale, lettuce, parsley, spinach, turnip, watercress, sprouts of alfalfa, cabbage, radish, and mustard seeds; seaweed and micro-algae (spirulina, chlorella, Klamath wild blue-green), wheat and barley grass
Combine with all other foods and three acid fruits (lemon, lime, and tomato).

NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES: Cucumber, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, turnip, radish, onion, green bean, sweet corn, sweet pea, zucchini, leek, garlic, eggplant, bell pepper, mushroom, asparagus, summer squash, okra. Combine with all other foods. Underlined foods are mildly starchy.

FRUIT

SWEET: Banana, date, fresh fig, persimmon, raisin, and all dried fruit.

Preferably eaten alone, although can be eaten at end of meal, ideally preceded by a green of lettuce and celery. Fruit combines with other fruit except sweet and acid fruits do not mix. Melons are best eaten alone. Combine only two or three fruits at once.

SUBACID: Apple, apricot, berries, cherry, grape, mango, nectarine, papaya, peach, plum..

ACID: Currant, grapefruit, kiwi, lemon, lime, orange, pineapple, pomegranate, sour apple, strawberry, tomato.

MELONS: Cantaloupe, casaba, crenshaw, honeydew, and watermelon.

CONCENTRATED SWEETENERS: Honey, maple syrup, rice syrup, barley malt, amasake, dried unrefined cane juice, fruit syrups and juices, and the herbs stevia and licorice.

Sweetened products such as herbal teas with honey and desserts are eaten alone for best digestion. If combined with a meal, they are taken at the end in small amounts, ideally preceded by a green salad. Ideally should be eaten alone except with herbal teas or water.

SPROUTING

Sprouts are great in: salads, sandwiches, omelets, added to bread dough (for every cup of sprouted wheat berries subtract 1/2 cup flour and 1/2 cup water from the recipe).

1. Obtain seeds that have not been chemically treating for planting. Mung beans, lentil, radish, alfalfa, and wheat berries all make excellent sprouts. Soy beans can be sprouted but require special attention, More about that later.
2. Soak 2 tbls seeds or 1/3 cup beans in 1-quart warm water overnight.
3. The next morning rinse seeds thoroughly in tepid water and drain. Place them in a quart jar and cover with a double layer of cheesecloth, nylon mesh screen or a damp washcloth. Fasten with a rubber band and store in a dark cupboard.
4. Continue to rinse 2 times a day and make certain excess water is drained off after rinsing so that the sprouts do not mold. You may invert the jar at an angle on a small dish to allow excess water to drain. More rinsing may be required in hot dry weather to prevent sprouts from drying out.
5. Sprouted mungbeans, lentils, and soybeans are ready in 3 days, while wheat berries take 2 days. Alfalfa and radish seeds take 4-5 days.
6. For soybeans, sort out the nonsprouters as soon as they are evident. Rinse at least 3 times daily and disentangle occasionally. They should not be eaten raw due to a protein digestion-inhibiting enzyme that is destroyed by heat. They should be lightly steamed for 10-20 minutes before eating.
7. When sprouts are ready, place them briefly in cold water. Sprouted alfalfa seeds will shed their cases, which float above the sprouts and can be easily skimmed off. Drain. To allow the sprouts to develop chlorophyll, (that is to develop a green color), place in sunlight for 4-8 hours. Store in refrigerator in a covered container.