

Nutrient dense foods

Food is a fundamental aspect of how well we age and live. The foods that are promoted to us and sold through supermarkets may not be the best foods for our health. Since the agricultural revolution, food production companies have proposed a standard diet that most of us eat. Many of us have then been eating foods that are further away from foods in their whole form and as a result we have lost a connection with food. Food is just that, food. Eat well to nourish your body. Rather than looking at if foods fit into a breakfast food or dinner foods perhaps look at foods as smaller meals and larger meals. This way you become more connected with your body and you can gauge where a meal fits into your day and how hungry you are. Then depending on the time of day and other factors you will be more able to determine how much food to eat.

Listening to your body about the amount and type of food that we eat takes the focus away from seeing food as this is a breakfast food and therefore should only be eaten at breakfast. Look at food for what it is, information that you tell your body how you want to feel. Eating fresh brightly coloured vibrant fruits and vegetables encourages more energy. Whereas eating food that has been harvested many days ago, processed so that it can be put into a packet, lacking colour and flavor may not give you the energy that you desire.

You have the power of choice when it comes to the food that you eat. For some of us it can be daunting to think 'well that's it, I have to eat healthy for the rest of my life now.' This sets you up to feel under a large amount of mental stress. Can you deal with making your next meal a healthful food choice? If so, after that meal is done then can you decide to make the next meal a healthy option.

Change comes from holding a new energy (or thought), every day you can affirm to hold your new change. It is a day by day choice to improve your health.

Ingredients can be full of colour, flavor and energy and also give us a new lease on life. These ingredients improve our health beyond just the magnificent nutritional quality of them. The food we eat is the information that tells our body which genes to express. With 19000 human genes we have the ability to change which genes get expressed by making a more healthful food choice. Choosing food for health allows you to live at your optimal potential.

Key Powerhouse ingredients:

- Eggs
- Bone broth (chicken/ beef)
- Beetroot
- Green leafy vegetables.
- ABC type spread / tahini
- Avocado
- Cacao
- Herbs and spices
- Ghee/Butter
- Quinoa / amaranth
- Salt
- Grass fed meat (chicken, beef, lamb, pork, etc.)
- Sprouts
- Fish
- Tofu

If you are eating foods that are high in energy but low in nutrition you end up being ‘overfed and undernourished.’ This may not seem like a huge issue but next time you are around town see that there are more people that are falling into the obese category.

It can be all too easy to point the finger at the larger people but the truth is some hormonal changes can happen in what you might call skinny people. You might call these the ‘skinny-fat person;’ what that means is that the ability to maintain blood sugar levels is lost meaning that they become at risk for cardiovascular disease (heart attack, stroke, diabetes to name a few). This is being represented even in elite athletes that are having high sugar gels and drinks to get them through training sessions. This means that you can be ultra-fit and still be having issues in regards to your health.

It does paint a fairly dire picture on what we can do. The good news is that it is as simple now as it has ever been to get things going on the right track. Eating foods that are rich in nutrition means that your body gets the fuel that it needs to heal and grow as well as give you energy that will transform your afternoon.

With this in mind the following are some examples of what you might call superfoods (high nutrition, high energy).

Green leafy vegetables: The cruciferous vegetables get a special mention in this category, they have a beneficial effect when it comes to managing and balancing hormone levels. The sulforaphane in this family is essential for supporting phase 2 liver detoxification pathways. Green leafy vegetables in general are a great source of folate and other B group vitamins that will assist with energy balance as well as disease prevention in areas like, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Eggs: Eggs are a complete food package in themselves, easy to grow (just need chooks)! Eating nutrient-packed foods like eggs helps meet the increased nutritional requirements of ageing. Vitamins A, D, E and K are rarely found in food that is so widely available which is unique, these group of vitamins is needed for healthy immune function, vision and healthy skin. Eggs are also dense with minerals and rich in omega-3 fatty acids, particularly the long chain DHA and EPA. Recent research has also shown that consuming eggs does not lead to increase in serum cholesterol levels. #Note that it is vital that you get excellent quality eggs, you may not get the above benefits from a \$2 a dozen variety.

Avocado: Like anything, avocados should be eaten in moderation. On average, eating half an avocado most days is healthy, and will not make you put on weight. Remember the ‘fat’ from avocado is very beneficial and essential for our body. Avocados are best known for their content of ‘good’ oils. That is, they contain a high level of oleic acid (omega-9) a monounsaturated dietary fat. Eating a diet high in monounsaturated oils can assist in decreasing total cholesterol levels, increasing HDL (‘good’ cholesterol) and decreasing LDL levels (‘bad’ cholesterol). Oleic acid has also been shown to promote the production of antioxidants and slow the development of heart disease.

Tahini: Tahini is made from ground up sesame seeds. Often tahini can be used in a similar way to peanut butter on crackers or toast (the same is true of ABC spread [Almonds, Brazil and Cashew spread]). Tahini is a rich source of many different minerals but is particularly high in calcium. So, for parents that are considering a dairy free diet and are concerned about the lack of calcium in foods tahini is great to know about. Tahini will often come in hulled and unhulled varieties (the hull is the outside shell of a sesame seed). This makes the unhulled version a little more nutrient dense, as well as being a little more bitter to taste.

Quinoa: This fabulous grain, pronounced 'keen wa' is perhaps the best kept secret of South America. It was one of the ancient staple foods of the Incas where it was called 'the mother grain'. It is one of the best plant sources of protein, containing the 8 essential amino acids and the protein is easily digested. Quinoa provides a wide range of options into your everyday cooking, quinoa can be substituted for rice in most dishes which means you can pack in some extra fiber. Quinoa is also gluten free which means that it can be used more widely for those with intolerances.

Beetroot: Beetroot has a wide range of useful benefits ranging from helping with constipation to helping to clear the blood of toxic build up through to heart health. Beetroots offer a high quantity of antioxidants which help to maintain a healthy and strong body. The purple colour of beetroot has been shown to be linked to how well your brain ages and lack of blue/purple colour fruit and vegetables may be linked to the increase in mental health disorders like dementia and Alzheimer's.

Cacao: Cacao is packed full of magnesium and B group vitamins, which is interesting as these are the nutrients your body uses more of when under periods of stress. So really your body is doing a smart thing by looking for food that is going to nourish itself. A square or two a day is all that is needed to get the health benefits. Cacao is a complex food with over 300 compounds and chemicals in each bite! Therefore, to really enjoy and appreciate chocolate you need to take time to taste it. It is great for your mood and relaxing, improves memory and concentration as it is a stimulant, is full of flavonoids and antioxidants that protect our blood and cholesterol and improves blood flow to the heart.

Honey: Honey has some aspects that if gathered and spun from your local area will help to reduce your sensitivity to the pollens in that area. This means that it is better to source your honey from a local producer. The soothing consistency of honey makes it ideal to mend and heal the gastric lining. Nutrient density will change with each honey and what is available for the bees at the time, however it is highly rich in minerals and immune enhancing abilities.

Herbs and spices: Many people say that the food they eat is getting boring and bland. In this area, there are many combinations that will add a new splash of flavour into your dishes. Herbs and spices are also rich in phytonutrients, these are plant compounds that have a health benefit (curcumin from turmeric, allicin from garlic). These compounds have been shown to have extraordinary health benefits as well as improving the taste of the overall dish. The strength of these phytonutrients is strong so only small amounts are needed to get great results, however a range is best rather than lots of one and they are recommended daily. Some examples of these are garlic, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander, parsley, cumin, ajwain, mustard seeds, fennel and many more.