

FIT Research Topics

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Darlene Minge – Being Fit Over Forty

Let me start by saying that waiting until WAY past 40 to begin a "fit life" has been a big mistake. As a young person I was active, but as time went on I fell into being a busy wife and mom...but just not active! I started gaining some weight but after my second bout with cancer the weight just seemed to pile on. I knew I needed to do something, so I did what most folks do...I started dieting! I must have tried over a dozen different ones. I did lose, but just as soon as I went back to eating "normal", I not only gained back what I had lost but extra pounds as well.

Exercising and eating right at the same time just never occurred to me. I would do one or the other. I did learn that diets do not work! I knew something needed to change and after seeing different friends on the FIT challenge, I knew that's what I needed to do. The accountability has really helped, and I've also been challenged to research food and fitness. One topic I've been looking into (even before this week) has been the subject of being "Fit Over 40". Outside the obvious about being fit, when you hit the 40 mark there are many things that need to be on your health radar. Some of them include:

1. Be sure to get regular mammograms and learn how to check yourself for early signs of breast cancer.
2. See your eye doctor. As our body ages, that includes our eyes.
3. Don't neglect dental check ups. They are important as you want to avoid any problems with your teeth (and you want to keep your teeth as long as possible).

4. Keep an eye on "suspicious moles" and use sunscreen to prevent skin cancer. These are just a few of the things we need to watch out for, but we also need to watch out for excessive weight gains. Obesity can lead to diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure and joint pains which can lead to arthritis. Eating right and exercising really "do a body good!"

What to do:

1. Add more whole grains, vegetables and fruit to your diet.
2. Drink 8-10 glasses of water every day.
3. Cut out sugar and white flour.

Start moving!!! You can do cardio exercises (walking, running, aerobics, biking, jumping rope, elliptical or any number of other cardio exercises). Or you can do strength exercises (weight lifting).

What you do is not as important as the fact that you do something! Get up, get busy, have fun and get FIT!

(Research from webMD...Leanne Skarnelis

Dr. Richard A. DiCenso...

"Fit Over 40")

Christy Brey – "Explaining 'Target Heart Range' for Optimal Fitness"

I decided to pick a research topic that I didn't really pay much attention to prior to looking it up... "Explaining 'Target Heart Range' for Optimal Fitness". While exercising in the past I would just try to survive, lol. I push myself to do my best but I have no idea if I'm pushing my heart so that I'm burning the most calories I can during that 45-60 minute routine. But isn't that the goal?! This link talked about some basic formulas to use so you can actually figure out for yourself what is your heart rate range and how to tell when you are actually burning fat. I'll try to sum it all up the best I can...

- Finding your heart rate: if you don't have a piece of equipment to tell you, the easiest way is to find your pulse on your neck/wrist and count the beats for 10 seconds. Times that # by 6 to find your Heart Rate.
- Next is to calculate your maximum heart rate, which goes down as you get older. This article suggests you take your age and subtract it from 220. So I'm 37 so my MHR would be approx.183.
- Finding your FAT BURNING ZONE is a % of your MHR. So you take your MHR and multiple it by .55 for your low threshold and .70 to give you the high threshold to shoot for. So for me $183 \times .55 = 100.65$ and $183 \times$

.70=128.1. In other words, my fat burning zone is 100-128 beats per min. •Finally you want to use that range as a guide to push yourself and ultimately get the most of your workout! In summary, I have not actually taken my heart rate with my fingers- When using the elliptical I put my hands on the bars and I typically hang out in the 140s +/- . I'm eager to compare my [#s](#) now knowing this formula to see where I land. I always know I'm burning calories when my forehead is pouring in sweat!! But now I have a few handy methods to help push me to know exactly where I fall....and hopefully this all made sense and now you do too. Here is the link to the main article I found most helpful <http://www.livestrong.com/article/208307-how-to-calculate-heart-rate-for-fat-burn/>

Jenelle Devine – Good Carbs vs. Bad Carbs

Before looking at examples of good carbs and bad carbs, it is important to understand the purpose of carbohydrates or their main function in our bodies. While carbs provide nutrients that our bodies need, they are our body's main source of energy. While researching this topic, it occurred to me that carbs are like the fuel to our body. Just as we put fuel in a car to make it go, we must put fuel in our body. We would never go to a gas station and intentionally choose a fuel that would burn up twice as fast. We want the fuel that will give us the best mileage. But for some reason, we will choose to fuel our bodies with bad carbs that burn up quickly, resulting in the need to constantly re-fuel.

So what are good carbs and bad carbs? Good carbs are complex carbs; they are made up of multiple/longer sugar strands/series that take the body longer to break down, providing the body with energy for a longer period of time. Bad carbs are simple carbs, which are a single sugar strand that is already broke down and ready for immediate use. Less work means less energy. Our bodies need the good carbs that provide long lasting energy!

Some examples of good carbs:

Whole grain bread/pasta

Brown rice

Whole oats

Beans

Peas

Examples of bad carbs:

Soda

Chips

White bread

Bagels

Cake

Sugar

References:

Healthyeating.sfgate.com - List of Good Carbs & Bad Carbs

by Mala Srivastava, Demand Media

Everydayhealth.com - DIET & NUTRITION

Good vs. Bad Carbohydrates

By Diana Rodriguez | Medically reviewed by Lindsey Marcellin, MD, MPH

Marion Drouillard – Good Carbs vs. Bad Carbs

So I haven't noticed that anyone has done good carbs vs bad carbs.. It seems to be something that can be kind of confusing. In a nutshell, carbs are one of the body's main fuel sources- so it's not good to avoid them altogether the way some diets do. The quality of the carbohydrate is important.

"Bad" carbs are the ones that are highly processed or refined - white flour, white sugar, high fructose corn syrup, white rice, as well as regular milk and things like fruit juice. They are simple sugars/starches that digest very quickly and cause the blood sugar to rise quickly or very high. That's why you get a sugar high followed by a sugar crash. Not only do these have a bad effect on blood sugar and adversely affect weight, they are usually void of any nutritional value.

Better carbs are those that come in their natural form, together with their fiber and nutrients that have not been stripped by processing. These kinds of carbs are digested slowly throughout the day so you have a constant energy supply instead

of a rush followed by a slump. Beans, brown rice, oats, quinoa, fruits eaten in their natural form and not separated as juice, (if you juice yourself that's better than just buying and drinking straight fruit juice) and whole vegetables like peas, corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, and winter squashes are examples of healthy forms of carbs. These good carbs are full of vitamins, fiber, and other nutrients.

Wheat flour is debatable. Even whole wheat can really spike blood sugar. A couple ways to improve its impact are using sprouted flour (Ezekiel bread & wraps, Alvarado Street Bakery bread in the Walmart freezer section) or true sourdough (that contains no commercial yeast). White sourdough bread actually causes a lower blood sugar response than whole wheat bread.

White potatoes... best in moderation or avoided if you are trying to lose weight. They are a simple starch so they have a high impact on the blood sugar. New potatoes eaten with the skin are one of the better options.

So.. in summary.. eat things that God made. Not food that man has changed dramatically from its intended form.

<http://healthyeating.sfgate.com/list-good-carbs-bad-carbs-6520.html>

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/101/nutrition-basics/good-carbs-bad-carbs.aspx>

Taryn Kobernat - Good Carbs vs. Bad Carbs

I loooooove bad carbs, so when I saw that there could be "good carbs", I knew I wanted to read more on the topic. I was surprised to learn that carbs are the main source of energy in our bodies. Though our bodies can gain energy when fat metabolizes, one article I read states getting energy from carbs is the preferred method for our brains.

The broad definition of a carbohydrate is foods that contain sugar, starch and fiber, and are usually plant-based: fruits, veggies, grains and legumes. (Dairy products are animal-based carbohydrates.)

In a nutshell, foods that contain "simple carbs" fall into the bad carb category. One simple carb we should absolutely avoid is high fructose corn syrup. It's a simple carb, and your body converts it into fat much faster than a "complex carb".

High fructose corn syrup has only been around since the 60's, yet it makes up more than 20% of the average person's carb intake. It is in all sodas and other processed foods.

Foods that contain "complex carbs" include grains, breads, pasta, beans, potatoes, corn and other vegetables. These complex carbs are digested more slowly, which means they are less likely to cause a rise in glucose. White flour and white rice are complex carbs, but, because they are so processed, they have no nutritional value. Instead, the better choices would be: whole grains (oats, some cereals, rye, millet, quinoa, whole wheat and brown rice), beans, legumes, fruits and vegetables.

Niki Lott - Good Carbs/Bad Carbs – What's the Difference?

I have a particular interest in this topic because of my journey with PCOS and infertility. Without going into all the details, PCOS is a gynecological disorder. While doctors do not know all the causes, they do know that part of the underlying problem is with how the body processes and produces insulin. All of the hormones in the body are affected to some degree. Because PCOS is an insulin-related issue, it is affected by carbs – both good and bad. I have done a LOT of research on this over the years. I have also done a lot of personal experimenting. Lol! "Good" carbs, "bad" carbs, low carbs, no carbs – I've done about all of it. I cannot say that I have found a cure, but I do believe that I have learned some principles that, when applied, have made a big difference in my health, and I am hoping will help prevent some of the long-term side effects of PCOS (like diabetes and heart disease).

This may sound simplistic to some, but I think that we have to compare all of our research, including our medical and nutritional research, to the Bible. God created our bodies, and no one is more qualified to tell us what is good for them than He is. There is SO much information out there about this topic (when I typed "good carbs bad carbs" in Google, I got 4.7 million results!!!). Much, if not all, of the things we read on this topic is biased toward the researcher's particular thoughts, ideologies, or desire for profit. God only has our best interests at heart.

For quite a while, I was convinced (by reading and researching and hype) that pretty much all carbs were bad for me. I tried eliminating carbs, and while I saw

some improvement in my hormones (because I wasn't eating so much sugar!), I was tired, achy, and had lots of stomach issues.

Then someone challenged me to find out what the Bible says on this subject, so I started studying. To mention just a very few of the ways the Bible addresses "carbs": God fed his people manna in the wilderness. He says that bread strengthens a man's heart (Ps. 104:15). Jesus himself served bread to His disciples and others on multiple occasions. He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." He compares His Word to honey and bread. God created vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds for our food (Gen. 1:29).

While I realize that people can develop allergies, and food sensitivities, and diseases that make it nearly impossible to eat certain types of food, as a whole if God created something to be good, it is good for us.

As I have researched and studied both the Bible and science, I have found that the reason that "carbs" have had a detrimental effect on our bodies, and have produced problems like heart disease and diabetes, is because we are removing all the nutrients through processing and refinement, and we are gluttonous. We over-indulge. The Bible has much to say on that topic as well.

Outside of the Bible, a book that has helped me tremendously is called, "What the Bible Says About Healthy Living". In this book, Dr. Rex Russell explains that the foods God created and prescribed for His people to eat are nutritionally and medically best for them. While we are no longer under the law, we are missing out on many of the blessings God desires us to have because we are not following His Word. Instructions in reference to food and eating are not found only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament as well.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31)

Specifically in reference to good vs. bad carbs, current scientific and medical research is supporting that we need carbs, but we need to eat them in moderation, in a state as close to possible to the way God made them (unrefined, unprocessed). I found this paragraph from webmd.com fascinating:

"Carbohydrates: Good or Bad?"

In the past five years the reputation of carbohydrates has swung wildly. Carbs have been touted as the feared food in fad diets. And some carbs have also been promoted as a healthful nutrient associated with lower risk of chronic disease.

So which is it? Are carbs good or bad? The short answer is that they are both.

Fortunately, it's easy to separate the good from the bad.

- We can reap the health benefits of good carbs by choosing carbohydrates full of fiber. These carbs that get absorbed slowly into our systems, avoiding spikes in blood sugar levels. Examples: whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans.
- We can minimize the health risk of bad carbs by eating fewer refined and processed carbohydrates that strip away beneficial fiber. Examples: white bread and white rice.”

(Source: <http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/carbohydrates>)

When we feed our bodies on carbs that are stripped of all nutrients and fiber, we are eating empty calories, and starving ourselves of what our body needs. We need a variety of carbs as well. Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds are all “carbs”. We need balance and variety in order to have good nutrition. As Dr. Russell says in "What the Bible Says About Healthy Living", “When nutrients are missing, our bodies send the signal, “I’m hungry! Get me more food!”

In conclusion, “bad carbs” are those carbs that are highly processed or refined. Good carbs are the carbs that are “whole”, closest to the way that God created them.

Melissa Schworer - Good Carbs vs Bad Carbs

via: <http://healthyating.sfgate.com/list-good-carbs-bad-carbs-6520.html>

Whole grain products:

Whole-grain products such as brown rice, whole-grain pasta, beans, whole wheat bread, whole oats, buckwheat, millet, whole rye, whole-grain barley and whole-grain corn are considered good carbohydrates. These foods are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that are beneficial to your health. Also,

they have a low glycemic index because they cause a slower change in blood sugar levels. Diets rich in high glycemic index foods cause a rapid rise in blood glucose levels, thereby increasing the risk for diabetes and heart disease. By contrast, foods with a low glycemic index help you achieve a more stable blood sugar and improve weight loss and control Type 2 diabetes.

Fruits, Vegetables and Legumes

Fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins, nutrients and carbohydrates. People who consume about 2,000 calories per day should eat 2 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables daily. Legumes such as beans, peas and lentils are high in fiber, carbohydrates and protein and low in fat. Legumes may decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and prostate cancer, reports the Linus Pauling Institute. On a 2,000-calorie daily diet, you should eat 3 cups of legumes a week, according to USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Refined Grains, Sweets and Biscuits

Refined grains such as white bread, pizza crust, pretzels, hamburger buns and megamuffins are bad carbohydrates. During the refining process, these grains are stripped of B-vitamins, fiber and certain minerals. In addition, they also have a high glycemic index, negatively affecting blood sugar levels. Other examples of bad carbohydrates include chips, cookies, sodas, bagels, cake, pastries, pancakes, soda, high fructose corn syrup and baked goods. These foods are low in nutrient density as they have little or no nutritional value and supply a large amount of calories. According to researchers at Yale University, bad carbohydrates such as sweets and biscuits cause falls in blood sugar, affecting the part of the brain that controls impulse. This leads to a loss of self-control and a desire for unhealthy, high-calorie foods. A diet high in calories contributes to weight gain, which increases the risk for developing Type 2 diabetes.

Carbohydrates provide your body with glucose it needs to function properly. Two types of carbohydrates exist: complex carbohydrates and simple carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates take time to break down into glucose. Foods rich in complex carbohydrates and fiber are called good carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates include sugars found in foods such as fruits and milk products and

sugars added during food processing. Foods rich in white flour and added sugars are called bad carbohydrates.

The glycemic index is a scale from 0 to 100 that ranks how quickly certain foods cause a rise in blood glucose levels. The higher the number, the faster you digest that food, which causes a more rapid elevation of blood sugar levels.

This little picture I posted shows the major difference between good carbs and bad carbs, but I wanted to point out some facts about some choices we can make in relation to the Glycemic Index.

SUGARS – More sugar GI values here:

Maple Syrup Natural Sugar 54
Honey Natural Sugar 50
Sorghum Syrup Natural Sugar 50
Cane Juice Sugar Extract 43
Coconut Palm Sugar Natural Sugar 35

FLOURS / BREADS –

Glycemic Index (GI)

White wheat flour bread – GI 71
Wonder Bread™ , average – GI 73
Whole Wheat bread, average – GI 71 (referring to store-bought “whole wheat bread)
50% cracked wheat kernel bread – GI 58
100% Whole Grain™ bread (Natural Ovens)* - GI 58
Whole wheat kernels (the whole grain itself) – GI 30

Side note by breadbeckers:

“Whole Wheat Flour is produced commercially by recombining ground bran with the white flour. The wheat germ and oil is left out, as it would cause the flour to go rancid quickly. No legal specifications are required for this labeling. Most people think “whole wheat” means “whole grain”.”

Whole grain flour that you buy from the store is not the same as freshly milled and that is why it has a higher glycemic index and misses many of the essential vitamins and minerals found in the whole berry.

In regards to sugar. A healthy amount of sugar per day as recommended by the nurses association (picture below) is 9.5 tsp a day which = around 50 sugar grams a day. MY SMOOTHIE = 65 today. So we need MUCH LESS sugar than we consume even on a healthy diet.

Elisabeth Thomasson - Good Carbs vs Bad Carbs

Carbohydrates are our bodies' energy source, in the form of glucose.

Carbohydrates are necessary for our bodies to function efficiently. However, not all carbohydrates are created equal.

Carbohydrates that are lacking in fiber, vitamins and minerals (processed foods, pastries desserts, soda, bread etc.) are considered "simple carbs".or "bad carbs." These foods contribute to diabetes, weight gain, heart disease and some neurological issues.

Carbohydrates that are rich in fiber, vitamins & minerals are "complex carbs" or "good carbs". Fruits, vegetables, beans etc.

A food's Glycemic Index must also be taken into consideration. The GI of a food measures it's impact on blood sugar. The lower the GI, the less impact it has on insulin production.

When considering which carbohydrates to get the energy our bodies need while striving for weightloss, we should choose a carb that has fiber, but also optimal vitamins.

Particularly when striving for weightloss, we must implement the Good, Better, Best policy. Obviously, we cannot choose the doughnut, unless of course, it is pumpkin spice because that has vegetables, right? Just kidding . We must take into consideration not just the amount of carbs, but the fiber, vitamins and minerals as well. For example: fruit instead of fruit juice, beans or legumes instead of potatoes.

Our daily intake should be 45%-65% carbs, 20%-35% fat, and 10%-35% protein.

To sum it all up

1. Good carbohydrates are necessary for weightloss
2. Avoid refined, processed and "low-fat" foods
3. Choose carbohydrates that are high in fiber, vitamins and minerals.
4. Choose carbohydrates with a low Glycemic Index.

If you are interested in further reading, www.whfoods.org has some great information on Glycemic Index and Carbs.

Research from Harvard School of Public Health, Webmd, Grain Brain by Dr. Pearl utter,M.D. & whfoods.org

Jessica Benowitz – Specific Workouts for Trouble Spots

This article hit all the trouble spots at one time. It explained that you cannot work on one area alone and expect results. However, if you do a full body workout your trouble spots will be benefitted. These are primarily body weight resistance workouts with high intensity. I am going to try these this week. <http://www.shape.com/blogs/fit-list-jay-cardiello/trouble-spot-workout>

Julie Gray – Specific Workouts for Trouble Spots

I decided to do mine on specific workouts for trouble spots, but as I researched I discovered the articles all reported on the same areas: arms/bat wings, glutes, thighs, hips & the dreaded abdominal area!! I wanted to learn something with this research not just read more articles on the exercises I know I should be doing. So I researched a specific problem area of mine! MY CALVES!!! I have large calves that I particularly hate more this time of year as one of my favorite fashion trends becomes more popular, BOOTS!! I love them but struggle to fit my calves into most pairs!!! So I looked up what I could do about them & here are some of the things I learned.

1. Do proper calf exercises! Too many times we target other problem areas but due to doing the exercise improper we increase calf muscle mass! For example, improper squats, stair steppers & box jumps that are done to target thighs & glutes can make calves bigger when we tire & overcompensate with our calves. A

great calf exercise to strengthen & elongate the calf is the calf raise done on the edge of a step. This allows the calf to get a good stretch in as the heel dips below the edge of the step! Be sure not to use weights doing this, body weight is plenty or you will begin to build bulk! Seated calf raises can be done to reduce the intensity of the workout for some. Also small hops, not jumps, forward & backward builds & stretches the calf. One more exercise that helps elongate the calf is transitioning from a squat to a calf raise. From the squat, raise up & move into a calf raise. Yoga & Pilates are also good workouts that provide excellent strength training but also incorporate the important element of stretching.

2. Use massage &/or acupuncture to stimulate blood flow through the legs. This promotes good circulation & helps with leg conditions such as edema & restless leg syndrome.

3. Limit sodium/salt intake that causes water retention & swelling.

4. Eat foods high in potassium. Potassium rich foods help absorb excess sodium in the body reducing the above mentioned water retention & swelling!!!

I hope this has helped someone, I know it has me & I will be more aware when doing my exercises that I am not working from my calves!! I want to wear more boots this fall!!!! For more info on this topic visit <http://slism.com/diet/slim-calves.html>

Jamie Knopp - Specific Workouts for Trouble Spots

“Specific Workouts for Trouble Spots: Tummy, Arms, Legs, Rear,”

Disclaimer: I do not endorse any of the celebrities mentioned, I simply learn better from sight myself and thought the visual might be helpful to you as well! It is important when thinking about targeting trouble spots to understand first what body shape you have. If you do not first determine your body shape you will not accurately plan what parts of your body are your "trouble spots"

There are four basic body shapes: Hourglass, Apple (Triangle), Pear (Bell), and Rectangle (Banana or Straight). An Hourglass shape will have hips and bust areas at the same proportion and waist small. The Apple has a tummy area larger than any other part of the body. The Pear is larger in the hips than in the bust area and

the waist slopes out to your hip. And finally the Rectangle shape is the same size in shoulder and hip areas and waist is slim - nice and tall with long legs.

Different exercises are better for different body types. For instance, squats are great for Apple, Pear and Hourglass - but a woman with a Rectangle shape (think Gwynneth Paltrow) will want to increase muscle in lower and upper body. For her, cardio is not for weight loss as much as it will be for her health - she will gain the biggest benefit from muscle tone. If you are a rectangle here are some exercises you may like to try:

Balance lunges instead of typical lunges to challenge your core, oblique twists will strengthen your abdominal muscles as well. Planks are said to be the trainers "dream exercise" because they work core, quads, shoulders and chest and can be changed up and be done in so many ways. They are great for all body types, but are especially recommended for the Rectangle.

A woman with an Apple Shape (Catherine Zeta-Jones) will be "troubled" by her tummy area more than any other place. An Apple shape can be fit, and still it can seem like you are soft in your tummy - you just have that wonderful ability to store ALL of your unused fat there! For her, cardio will be her "go-to" exercise. Belly weight is easiest to target with High Intensity Aerobics. If this is your body type - look into HIIT workouts to provide what you need for your trouble spots. You will want to beef up your core training while still continuing to allow your other muscles to stay strong with your running, and High Intensity workouts. Add some sit-ups, twists, and plank rows to get maximum results on your middle.

The Pear (Kim Kardashian) has other problems altogether, she lives by the motto "A minute on the lips, a lifetime on the hips." However, as Women's Health puts it "A pear often becomes obsessed with whittling down her lower body by doing dozens of lunges and leg lifts. Of course you want your butt, hips, and thighs to be tight and toned. But, pears: you also want your body to be balanced, so don't neglect what's above the belt." A Pear needs total body - and special concentration on the upper in order to become more proportioned. In my experience (for this is my own type) a Pear's bone structure also contributes to her shape more than fat even can. Therefore - it is nigh on impossible(lol) - to eliminate that largeness. Shape.com puts it this way "To help even out a heavier lower half, you'll want to create a stronger, more defined upper body to balance

out your shape. This plan combines cardio and strength into one circuit workout designed to help you burn more calories (so long, saddlebags!) and develop metabolically active lean muscle mass at the same time." Squats and upper body toning will be your best friends! Try to find as many Squat variations as possible, and learn to enjoy strength training those arms! Get into push-ups and burpees (yikes did I actually say that!) You will love the results!

Last but not least, those women that have it (relatively) easy: The Hourglass (Sofia Vergara). The down side: EVERY area is a potential trouble spot. The upside: EVERY exercise will help you! Do you find yourself gaining in the tummy - add in extra core work (sit-ups, leg raises, planks). Do you find yourself gaining in the hips and thighs, add in extra squats and jumping jacks. The great thing about the hourglass is that you can go total body and you will be able to get pretty proportioned without having to think through what exercises to add in to get the most benefit out of your shape.

With all of that being said, here are some great ways to work your trouble spots:

1. Belly - v sit ups and crunches
2. Saggy Bottom - squats, lunges, or just good old running!
3. Bingo Wings (ie. wiggly upper arms) - do LOTS of tricep curls and push ups
4. Thighs - squats or pretend that you are going in-line skating (better yet, really do it!)

Here is a great reference that I came across while studying to write this that may be helpful as well:

<http://media-cache-cd0.pinimg.com/originals/ec/a0/4b/eca04bfeab9104514315b612408ccbd2.jpg>

LaDawn Rau - "Specific Workouts for Trouble Spots"

I researched core fitness, which is a group of muscles that include your abs, back, pelvic floor, and hips and found it is potentially the most important area to focus on. Dancers and Yogis have focused on this area long before it came into the mainstream and the health and wellbeing they, as a group, have enjoyed late into life is indicative of this area's importance. **The strength of your core is directly related to your posture, stability and the strength and health of your back.**

While we would all love to have an amazing "six pack" (the rectus abdominis muscle group) which can be achieved with a crunches, it is the underlying transverse abdominis that is doing all the work. You can't see the erector spinae, either - it's behind you, supporting your back. And did you know that those pelvic floor muscles aid in stabilizing your spine? Therefore is important to find a complete core strengthening program that will target each of these areas and as a result, you will tone your more visible ad area.

There are many, many programs you can follow. Because I do most of my exercising at home, I usually look for exercise that uses body weight or other simple, easy to access tools. Luckily, it is easy to find these types of core exercises on the internet and videos of how to do them on YouTube.

Furthermore, **you can work your abs and core area until the cows come home, but until you lose the layer of fat on top of your abs, you'll never see them.** This can only be accomplished through proper nutrition. To quote a sports medicine source, "In order to decrease body fat and build muscle you need proper nutrition. The best diet is one that includes a balance of whole (not processed) foods including complex carbohydrates, quality protein and healthy fat. Eating several small meals throughout the day helps many people stay more satisfied and reduces hunger. Other tips for avoiding fat gain include: getting adequate calcium, eating breakfast and eating high fiber foods. Make sure you stay well-hydrated by drinking water throughout the day and be sure not to cut calories too drastically or you could inadvertently lower your metabolism." Sounded like it was right out of the FIT handbook!

Bottom line...to target the abs, it takes work on all surrounding muscle groups (your core) as well as a balanced, nutritional diet combined with cardio workouts to burn excess fat.

Sources:

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/bestabexercises/a/betterabs.htm>

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/abdominalcorestrength1/a/NewCore.htm>

<http://stateoffitnessblog.com/2014/02/27/do-we-need-a-strong-core-absolutely/>

Alicia Edwards –

How Much Sugar are we Eating vs. How Much Should we be Eating

I was amazed when I started doing the research. It actually brought tears to my eyes. One of the sites I read says that the American Heart Associations recommends 9.5 tsp of sugar daily. The average adult eats 22 tsp and the average child 33. That was so eye opening. We fill our kids lunch boxes with sugar. One soda has more sugar than 2 pop-tarts and a twinkie. It is crazy. I know that it is hard to cut out sugar entirely, but I am going to do my best to help my family and I to atleast cut our sugar down. I am including a link to a website that really opened my eyes.

<http://www.foodbeast.com/2013/10/01/an-unforgiving-breakdown-of-how-much-sugar-america-consumes/>

Lauren Lambert –

How Much Sugar Americans Eat vs. How Much They Should Eat?

Women: 100 calories per day (25 grams or 6 teaspoons).

To put that into perspective, one 12oz can of coke contains 140 calories from sugar, while a regular sized snickers bar contains 120 calories from sugar.

But it's important to note that there is no need for added sugars in the diet. They don't serve any physiological purpose.

****The less you eat, the healthier you will be.**** <---- main reason to stop all refined sugar right there!!

Soft drinks, baked goods, processed foods... these foods have no place in the diet of someone who is overweight.

Stick to real, single ingredient foods and avoid processed foods high in sugar and refined carbohydrates.

*****This was my favorite I read from this article*****

Sugary junk foods stimulate the same areas in the brain as drugs of abuse. The same way that a smoker needs to avoid cigarettes completely, a sugar addict needs to avoid sugar completely.

Complete abstinence is the only reliable way for true addicts to overcome their addiction.

****So true. You can't dabble with sugar, just as you can't dabble with sin. It Will always lead to destruction!****

NOW how much sugar do Americans eat a day...

The average American eats 22 teaspoons a day!! That's almost 4 times the amount we should be eating!

The biggest culprit is soda. Really? It's not worth it ladies! A nice big cup of ice water is just as good and is very good for you! So let's decide to not be an average American!!

Sources:

<http://authoritynutrition.com/how-much-sugar-per-day/>

<http://bamboocorefitness.com/not-so-sweet-the-average-american-consumes-150-170-pounds-of-sugar-each-year/>

<http://www.facethefactsusa.org/facts/the-sweet-life-and-what-it-costs-us>

Jenny Maxson - How Much Sugar Americans Eat vs. How Much They Should Eat?

Sugar has come to play a major role in our lives. According to a study done by the USDA in 2000, Americans consumed on average 152 lbs. of sugar/sweetener's within a year. These sweeteners do not just appear in pastries, cookies, and donuts; they are added into everything we eat. The average person consumes about 22 teaspoons of sugar a day. The average person should try to limit sugar intake.

Here is a helpful guide:

- Women: about 6 tsp (100 calories per day)
- Men: about 9 tsp (150 calories per day)
- Children: about 3 tsp (50 calories per day)

Does this mean we need to completely throw out any sweeteners of any sort? No! Moderation is key. Think of your diet as you would your finances. Pay your bills first before spending on extras. Simply put, consume calories your body needs to function and then based on your activity level, you may add sweeteners (again, in moderation). You would not budget for a vacation every day, neither should you consume highly sweetened foods every day. Of course when I say you may add sweeteners, it is each person's responsibility to take charge of their own actions.

It is recommended to base your treat on a scale of nutritional value. The higher the nutritional value the better it will be for your body. Some of the biggest culprits with added sugar and no nutritional value are in the drinks we consume- soda, fruit juices, flavored coffees, and sweet tea.

In my research about sugar, I found some helpful tips that I plan to incorporate into my family's diet. Here are just a few:

- Add fruit which has natural sugar and is free from preservatives.
- Cut back the sugar called for in recipes by 1/3 to 1/2 cup.
- Use sweeteners that come from natural sources such as pure maple syrup and honey. (in moderation of course)

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyDietGoals/Frequently-Asked-Questions-AboutSugar_UCM_306725_Article.jsp#mainContent

<http://cardiacscanny.com>

<http://www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter2.pdf>

Lori Moore – "Why Diet Drinks are Killing People"

As a former drinker a few times a week, I thought, it can't be that bad. Right? Research was taken from Health.com, AuthorityNutrition.com and WebMD

Most people actually switch to diet drinks because they want to cut back on calories to lose weight. Well research actually finds the opposite is true with diet drinks. Consuming diet drinks actually doubles your risk of being overweight or obese. The artificial sweeteners in diet drinks triggers insulin release from the pancreas that sends your body into fat storage mode. You're not actually taking in

extra calories, but you aren't taking in anything that does your body any good either.

Early research on Aspartame has shown that it may be linked to headaches and depression.

Female diet soda drinkers have shown they have lower bone mineral density in their hips which can compound the problems of osteoporosis with those in the future or already struggling with this condition.

Just one diet soda soft drink a day can increase your risk of having a vascular event including heart attack, stroke or vascular death.

Diet soda drinkers have also been shown to have an increase chance of preterm labor. With just one per day the chances of preterm labor increase to 38%!

And if all that wasn't enough, let's just add a few more. Artificial sweeteners have more intense flavors than real sugar, so over time it can dull your senses to the real flavors from fruits. Citric acid in soda can weaken and destroy tooth enamel over time. Studies and research have shown that the mouths of a diet soda drinker, a cocaine user and a methamphetamine user each had the same level of tooth erosion in them.

So, what's the best no calorie drink out there? Plain old water. It is essential for all your bodily processes and will be the best friend of someone who wants to lose weight.

Kristen Green - "Why Diet Drinks are Killing People"

As a former Diet Coke addict, this topic seems to call to me. Diet sodas are a quick fix for those that are looking for a no calorie pick me up! They are sweetened with artificial sweeteners and seem to be a good option for those striving to lose weight. **What is ironic though is that we will go through the drive thru window and order our diet coke and....a huge burger and fries.** That is where one problem comes in with drinking diet pop. We consume that huge meal and oddly enough do not feel satisfied. We are still hungry. There are not any calories found in diet pop, so no energy is sustained. A crash will immediately follow the consumption of a diet drink. **Very seldom, do I see a trim, fit, healthy person walking around with a can of Diet Coke in their hands.** It truly has no place in the life of a fit person. The artificial sweeteners pose several dangerous risks for those consuming it on a daily basis. I will link to that article below. Heavier people

generally are the ones who drink diet drinks, so they are already at higher risks for some of the problems that come with artificial sweeteners, such as, aspartame. The biggest question is usually, "What can I drink?" The winner on that is....Water! Hands down, without a doubt. There are other things, such as, coffee and tea that can be good as well.

<http://www.today.com/health/no-seriously-diet-sodas-are-terrible-you-too-4B11200933>

Amy Mitchell - "Why Diet Drinks are Killing People"

My husband & I quit drinking diet soda a year ago because we just didn't like how it made us feel. Now, reading this article and watching these videos, it all makes sense. Diet sodas, which are sweeter than real sodas, trick our bodies into releasing more insulin than we need. We then crave more carbs to balance this out. Also, we justify eating that burger and fries because we're "cutting calories" with a diet soda. The result is weight gain, not loss, with diet soda consumption. In addition to artificial sweeteners, this link's videos also address the resulting "belly fat" many of us are carrying around. This fat is metabolically active and not only alters our metabolism, but contributes to diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.

We all notice excess weight on ourselves and others. We see "muffin tops", "spare tires", and "aprons of fat". Let me tell you, that's just the beginning. In my job, I get a look at the fat surrounding the organs via ultrasound, CT scans, MRIs, and Xrays. I'm astonished to see the stress we are putting on our organs and skeletal systems. We MUST end this deadly cycle of overeating and under-caring. CONGRATS TO ALL OF YOU FOR MAKING THIS COMMITMENT. Cheers to a healthier you (with a glass of water, of course!)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/11/diet-soda-health-risks_n_3581842.html

Katie Nichols – "Why Diet Drinks are Killing People"

I researched the health risks of Diet Soda. I used to drink several cans of Diet Coke a day and I'm so glad I quit!

Here are some health risks of drinking Diet Soda:

1. METABOLIC SYNDROME: Those who drink diet soda over a long period of time are 34% more likely to develop Metabolic Syndrome.
2. TYPE II DIABETES: Middle-age to older adults were 67% more likely to be diagnosed with Type II diabetes when they drank diet soda regularly versus those that didn't.
3. STROKE AND HEART ATTACK: This study was limited to those in Manhattan, but daily diet soda drinkers were 61% more likely to have a stroke or heart attack.
4. WEIGHT GAIN: Those who drank diet soda were 65% more likely to become overweight in 7-8 years, and 41% more likely to be obese in that same amount of time.
5. KIDNEY FUNCTION: A study showed that women who drank two or more cans of diet soda a day were more at risk for a decrease in kidney function. This was only for diet soda and not regular soda.
6. ROTTING TEETH: Soda in general is very acidic and can cause tooth decay. None of those health problems sound fun to me. Drinking Diet Coke just isn't worth it!

Sources:

<http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/117/6/754.full.pdf+html>

<http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/32/4/688.short>

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41479869/ns/health-diet_and_nutrition/

http://www.nature.com/aj/formerly_published.html

Harvard Medical Study

Amanda Vann - "Why Diet Drinks are Killing People"

Diet drinks are killing people because their main ingredient, Aspartame, is a poison. It causes many health issues plus it causes cancer. FDA's toxicologist told Congress that Aspartame can cause Tumors, Brain cancer, headaches, memory loss, seizures, vision loss, and other cancers. It also worsens and mimics the symptoms of fibromyalgia, MS, lupus, ADD, diabetes, Alzheimer's, chronic fatigue, and depression. One third of an Aspartame molecule is labeled as a metabolic poison and narcotic.

Diet sodas have less caffeine than coffee, yet it's the Go-To for a "pick me up" or an absolute necessity in people's lives.

Aspartame is 30-8,000 times sweeter than sugar and the body desires and craves that level of sweetness. Eating enough chocolate to reach that level would mean eating LOADS of calories, so the brain justifies the Diet Drink to fulfill and satisfy that longing, thus leaving you room to eat other calories. Choosing "poison" over "calories" to cause a chain reaction ADDICTION. Same kind of addiction DRUGS cause.

1977 - U.S. Food and Drug Administration tried to ban Aspartame, but the Food Industry decided to put a warning label on food with Aspartame in just like the label found on Cigarettes. "...may cause cancer..."

1990 - Calorie Control Council insisted cancer was only found in rats, not people, and removed the label. With the rise of sickness and cancer being found in people who consume diet drinks on a regular basis, you'd think more effort would be made to official ban this for good.

On a personal note: Once I got past the "withdrawal" (like drugs) I felt so much better without diet soda. Better from Head to Toe.

Plus, Aspartame is in Capri Sun's Roaring Waters. I stopped giving that to my kids and their erratic, almost ADHD behavior, changed.

Diet drinks cause cancer and are poisonous. Is ZERO calories worth dying over?

Sonja Ward - "Why Diet Sodas are Killing People"

Attached is the article with all the reasons products containing aspartame are detrimental to our health, but I also read 2 different articles proclaiming that within limits they aren't so bad. I really enjoy my coke zero, so this is what I wanted to hear!!! Yay!!! Now for my personal experience, when I began this 8 week challenge I allowed myself coke zero and a sweet item on Sunday (cheat day). Each Monday, I was sick! (Nauseous, bloated, stomach ache, constipation moving onto diarrhea). I had had this pain/sickness before and had diagnosed myself with diverticulitis (similar symptoms). I must add here that prior to beginning this challenge coke zero was a daily part of my diet! I haven't had my coke zero in 3 weeks! Nor have I had those symptoms I had associated with diverticulitis. In fact my bowel movements are more regular than ever! I have to say I miss my coke zero (sniff, sniff) but not the side effects! I have only noticed small insignificant changes with my sweet treat on Sunday, but am craving them less

and less as I'm finding my healthy treats!

<http://www.divinecaroline.com/self/wellness/your-diet-coke-killing-you>

Melinda Dove – What Supplements Should a Woman be Taking?

We all know we should be eating healthy, but so many questions arise with that knowledge. Will eating fruits and vegetables be enough for me? Should I be supplementing with vitamins? What should my intake be at this age? This summary should answer the most common inquiries on supplements we, as women, have.

1. Antioxidants (beta-carotene, vitamins C and E) are necessary no matter what stage in life (whether child-bearing or menopausal). Eating the recommended five servings of fruit and vegetables will provide what you need daily. If you are among the average woman who does not get enough, a supplement would be beneficial. Antioxidants have been known to lessen the risk of cancer, prevent chronic illnesses, and slow down the aging process.

2. B Vitamins are essential as well. The most important B vitamins include: B6, B12 and folic acid. A little research of the advantages may “B” just the thing to motivate you to include them in your diet.

3. Vitamin D contributes to good bone health. The amount one needs of this can easily be absorbed through exposure to sunshine!

4. Vitamin K is found in green leafy vegetables and is necessary for good health in older women. It also assists in strong bones and normal blood clotting.

Deficiencies in these vitamins can cause major health problems. The advantages of consuming the right amount of these vitamins regularly may save great pain physically and emotionally in the long run. Dieticians will agree that with effort and discipline these vitamins could be included in your everyday diet. If for any reason you do not consume the recommended amount, supplements will aid you on your path to good health.

Information found on “Essential Vitamins for Women at Every Age” on WebMD.com.

Joanna Kobernat - What Supplements Should a Woman be Taking?

One trip down the vitamin and natural supplements aisle of any drugstore can leave you feeling completely overwhelmed! Once you start to take into consideration the arguments of liquid supplements versus the pill form, much less the credibility of some alternative medicine suppliers, and you really don't know what to do. Do capsule or "pill" vitamins get absorbed into your system, or do they just pass straight through without doing any good at all? Are vitamins in liquid form truly better for you and thus worth the extra cost? How can you be sure that a product will do all that it promises to do? What really is a good vitamin? Where is the best place to get them from?

To be honest, I don't yet know the answer to all these questions. you will find many conflict and claims, once you begin to research it.

However, the good news is that if you eat a balanced diet full of whole, healthy foods and lots of vegetables, fruits and lentils, you are going a long ways toward getting all of the supplements you need.

It is important, as well, that you determine what nutrients you can get through your food and what you are going to need to supplement through a bottle. When you do need to purchase supplements, be sure to purchase well recognized brands, carried by mainstream stores or a reputable health store. The alternative medicine industry is a multibillion dollar industry that is filled with both truly good resources and products - as well as scams and gimmicks, unfortunately.

While doing my research on this topic, I discovered that most women who, even though eating a healthy diet, are still lacking five key nutrients. They are vitamin E, potassium, calcium, vitamin E and magnesium. You can supplement almost all of these nutrients by eating a diet that is rich and vegetables, fruit, lentils and nuts.

Some of the best vitamins recommended were:

Black Cohash – (helps with hot flashes)

Glucosamine (helps arthritis)

Echinacea (can decrease the severity of colds and infections)

Ginger (helps with nausea)

Ginseng (boost your immunity and possibly reduces the risk of cancer)

Lycopene (reduces the risk of heart disease and possibly cancer)

For those of us who struggle with PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), Inositol (also known as Vitamin B8), Folic Acid and Vitamin D taken together can help us increase ovulation and decrease other PCOS side effects.

In fact, folic acid is especially important for all young women as it helps to keep red blood cells healthy and guard against cancer and birth defects. Folic acid can be taken in supplement form or is also found in asparagus and beans.

The other most recommended supplements are:

Vitamin C (found in citrus fruits, broccoli and red peppers)

Vitamin D (believed to reduce breast cancer and protect against ovarian cancer and diabetes. You will most likely have to take a supplement for this.)

Calcium (build strong bones; will probably need to supplement in order to get enough)

Iron, fish oil (omega-3's), and probiotics are all key to our health as well.

Again, remember that your best defense against disease and roadmap for a healthy body for the future is a balanced diet built on whole, healthy foods that, as much as possible, you prepare yourself.

*Sources: Research articles via Livestrong, Prevention, and Women's Health

Eileen Papale – What Supplements Should a Woman be Taking?

I have never been a proponent of taking supplements. When considering that God provided all that we need to be healthy, I surmised that eating a variety of healthy, whole foods should provide adequate nutrition for my body. On this journey of learning to make healthier choices and of learning new ways of supplying the right nutrients for my diet, I have wondered if adding a supplement would increase my chances of having all my nutrient needs met. Specifically, when looking into eating more of a plant-based diet, several authors suggested that B-12 supplements would probably be the only additional nutrient needed to maintain a healthy diet.

Conflicting magazine and news articles cause confusion about the topic.

Compelling testimonials from acquaintances make one feel that they are missing

out on some miracle cure for what ails you. Advertisers suggest that healthy diets require a supplement.

The emphasis in my studies now has to do with evidence-based research and reliable sources based on research. On the .org, .gov, and .edu sites, the general consensus seems to be that eating a well-balanced diet should provide all the nutrients one needs to maintain good health. The Mayo Clinic recommends that adults over the age of 50 should eat food fortified with B-12 or take a supplement that contains B-12. HealthCheck.org recommends that women need to ensure adequate intake of iron, calcium, and Vitamin D. Along with this suggestion is a list of the foods that would provide these nutrients.

While there are many whose opinions I respect who feel that supplements are vital, I will continue to follow the findings of those who have conducted research on the efficacy of additional supplements.

<http://www.healthcheck.org/page/nutrients-women>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/supplements/art-20044894>

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/factsheets/nut.htm>

Kerah Tuiolosega - What Supplements Should a Woman be Taking?

After the research I have done, thus far, I feel supplements are unnecessary for the vast majority of us. Our bodies are fully capable of snagging all the nutrients they need to run properly out of a healthy, well-balanced diet. However, I did come across some information that made me wonder about periods in my life when I have taken multiple supplements. Specifically, pregnancy. During the pregnancies of both of our children I was prescribed and suggested various supplements to ensure optimal health of my growing infants. I had never heard of UL's or Upper Limits. UL's are the highest amount of specific vitamins and minerals that can be safely taken without risk of overdose or serious side effects. This number is comprised of both the amount in the supplement and the total from your daily food. UL's have to be looked up. These limits are not listed on food or supplements labels. I work in a clinic setting and have heard on various

occasions that our bodies will take what they need from the supplements and dispose of the rest through urination. While that may be partially true, clearly it still has the ability to cause damage prior to expulsion. The following articles make me reconsider just how proactive I have to be when choosing if, when and how much I should take of things like prenatal vitamins. For example, Stuart's prenatal vitamins have 800mcg of Folic acid and the UL is 1000mcg per day. At first glance this seems ok until you consider nearly all bread, pasta and cereal is fortified with it as well. It would be very easy to exceed the max amount just with breakfast. Too much Folic acid can mask a B12 deficiency that can lead to nerve damage <http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-and-supplements/lifestyle-guide-11/vitamins-minerals-how-much-should-you-take?page=1>. Anyways, bedtime is calling

<https://www.bcm.edu/research/centers/childrens-nutrition-research-center/consumer/archives/folicacid-fortified.htm>

Bree Tuttle – Why Women Should Lift Weights

I have a soft spot for this subject for several reasons. 1) I used to lift weights and saw some pretty amazing results (I am getting back into the habit and love it); 2) I'm tired of hearing women (love y'all, but you know I'm right) complain that they don't want to "bulk up" and yet get frustrated when your cardio and diet aren't giving you the results you are looking for; 3) When I did lift weights and would be right next to guys struggling with the same weight as me, it made me feel pretty awesome!

So here are the top 9 reasons why women should lift weights:

1. Your metabolism will soar

As women age, they naturally lose muscle mass. This causes your metabolism to slow, which means you could start building a spare tire by the time you reach your 30s. "When you do weight-bearing exercises, you start revving up your metabolism—and it keeps burning for many hours after your workout," says Wayne Westcott, PhD, director of fitness research at Quincy College

2. You'll you burn fat

Muscle tissue is more "active" than fat tissue, with each pound burning about 30 calories a day just to sustain itself. So even if you're sitting on the couch or are

stuck at your desk for eight hours a day, the extra muscle mass you develop will burn more calories, helping you keep weight off for good.

3. Your body will get tighter

While cardio is important and will help melt fat, weights sculpt your body, creating curves and definition right where you want it. They also help fight the effects of gravity, making you much less likely to have arm jiggle in your upper arms.

4. You'll fit into your skinny jeans

"One pound of fat takes up much more space than one pound of muscle," says CrossFit athlete and certified level-1 trainer Cheryl Brost, a 41-year-old mother of two. "So even though muscle weighs more, what do you want all over your body? Something that's bulky, like body fat, or something that's lean, and takes up less space, like muscle?"

5. You'll reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes

Curbing age-related muscles loss isn't just good for your looks; it can protect your heart and help ward off type 2 diabetes, too. "Muscle helps remove glucose and triglycerides from the bloodstream, which reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes, as well as hardening of the arteries," says Timothy Church, MD, PhD, a preventive medicine expert at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. For specific exercises that can reduce your diabetes risk, check out our Diabetes Exercise Solution.

6. Your blood pressure could drop

"Strength training lowers blood pressure for 10 to 12 hours after each session, which gives your heart a break," says William Haskell, PhD, professor emeritus of medicine at Stanford University. "How strength training does this is not completely understood, but it probably has subtle effects on everything from hormones to nervous system regulation."

7. You can do it anytime, anywhere

You don't need a lot of space or a lot of special equipment to get a great strength workout, says Westcott. Simply using your own bodyweight through the use of pushups, planks, chair dips, squats, and pull-ups is enough to tone and strengthen your entire body. Bonus: You can do it indoors, which means you don't have to weather the cold, freezing temps of winter or the scorching heat of summer.

8. You'll blast loads of calories

Plyometric strength moves (think squat jumps and burpees) and kettlebell workouts skyrocket your heart rate, which boosts the calorie burn of regular strength training routines. These types of workouts give you cardio, strength, and sculpting all in one, which is a great timesaver, says Freytag.

9. It's good for your bones

Strength training is one of the 12 best ways to break-proof your bones. "Lifting weights can help counteract age-related bone loss," says Ethel Siris, MD, director of the Toni Stabile Center for Osteoporosis at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. "Strengthening your muscles also improves balance and keeps you as strong as possible which lowers your chances of a fall-related fracture.

I can't think of 9 better reasons to lift weight than that. Can you?

*Article taken from Prevention.com

<http://www.prevention.com/fitness/fitness-tips/9-reasons-women-should-lift-weights>

Elisabeth Thomasson - Why Women Should Lift Weights

I have researched weightlifting for women this week. I appreciated Bree Tuttle's post and don't really have much to add to what she posted. There seems to be many advantages of lifting including increased metabolism, increased fat burn (40% more according to one article), reduced risk of heart diseases, strengthens bones, stress relief, decreased risk of diabetes, increased quality sleep, helping you fall asleep faster, sleep deeper and wake less often...unless of course you have an infant that wants to eat at 2:00 am...sigh

Lifting weights strengthens the muscle which in turn, burns calories more effectively than fat.

The one conflicting part that I have seen is whether or not strength training combined with a healthy diet is enough for weight loss or does it need to be combined with cardio for overall health? Anybody have a personal experience they can share?

Courtney Shloss – Why Women Should Lift Weights

Why woman should lift weights was the topic I picked to study this week. Instead of repeating all the awesome facts that some ladies have already explained, I thought I'd share my experience between cardio and weights (strength training) and the results I received. I'm not an expert but maybe someone can relate and take something from it.

When I started working out, I used a 20 minute workout video every day that was mostly weights and strength training. I loved the toning effect it had, but I didn't lose very much weight.

I switched to cardio when my sister had some awesome results from her running routine. Because of my knees I ended up making a routine on an elliptical (lower impact) and started seeing results but they were up and down. It wasn't until I changed the way I ate that I saw great results! Weight lifting didn't even cross my mind as cardio was working great!

After about 20lbs I hit a plateau and wanted to change it up.

I started a strength training program and I will be honest ladies I missed my cardio! I was losing little or no weight! After a week though I couldn't believe how loose my clothes were getting! I was toning and shrinking even though the weight loss was slower. I started adding cardio back in and now do a little of both and love the results! If any of you ladies are in a rut or debating about strength training I would encourage you to add it even if it's slow. You love the results!

Suza Thoelen - Why Women Should Lift Weights

I have some previous experience with lifting weights, and I have been attending a BodyPump class at my gym during this challenge, so this topic was of interest to me.

Seven reasons to lift weights:

1. You burn more calories (over time). Maintaining muscle requires more calories from your body.
2. You maintain muscle. Between the ages of 30 and 70, women lose an average of 22% of their total muscle. Recommendation: 2-3 body strength total body workouts / week (30 minute sessions) along with cardio (same or alternate days).

3. You build stronger bones by lifting weights. This is because your muscles pull on the tendons which pull on the bones, strengthening them.
4. It is healthy for your heart.
5. You'll feel happier. Just like running, weight lifting produces endorphins, a pleasure-inducing hormone in your brain. Exercise also reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol, potentially relieving feelings of anxiety and agitation.
6. Help prevent (or improve your quality of life if you have) diabetes. Lifting weights helps improve the way your body processes sugar. Weight training combined with cardio may be even more beneficial than drugs.
7. Improves balance. Weight training helps maintain fast-twitch muscle fibers (which deteriorate with age). These fibers are what help us keep our balance.

Carmen Koehn - Why Crash Diets Don't Work

Why crash diets don't work... it begins at the beginning.

Proverbs 22:6 (KJV)

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

My sister-in-law and I were talking with our Zumba instructor after class last week about the importance of diet along with exercise. I confessed for her that she was "miss 500 calories a day". Of course, the instructor was all over that. She defended herself with the argument that, that is what her mother did, and that is what she know works. I sat there thinking; her mother, still to this day, struggles with her weight and body image. How is it, we are taking our instruction from someone who continues to yo-yo diet? My sister-in-law also makes separate meals for herself, for her kids and for her husband.

Answer: because that is what Mom did.

Because that is what I know.

I have always balked at that notion. I refuse to be skinny, if I have to make 3 separate meals at every meal. I refuse to starve myself.

So, I have been milling this over and over. Here is my question? Why are we feeding our kids junk and, at the same time, showing them that Mommies are supposed to be hungry all the time? Aren't we really training them to eat and gorge and balloon out until they reach adulthood and then jump on the diet train as an adult? So, I say, lets break this cycle. When I started retraining myself to eat better and get moving back in March, I wrote down 3 reasons for doing this. I put that little list up on my fridge.

#3 was: "I want my kids to learn healthy habits."

Let's choose to eat healthy meals with our kids! My kids actually like more vegetables than I do! Let's make trying new things an adventure. Let's engage them in healthy conversations! My kids love to help me cut the lettuce and pull the carrots and search for the special surprise of a cucumber in our little garden. Kids love to move and jump around. When I do a workout video, they almost always want to come in and join me. Yes, they get in the way. Yes, they do it all wrong. But, I still let them join me. I'm teaching them. I'm teaching them to be good stewards. We are stewards of our garden, of our table, and more importantly of our bodies. We need to continually care for our bodies so that we can serve our Saviour in the best capacity possible.

Crash diets do not work because it is faulty reasoning to have an end date to good health. Crash diets do not work because we cannot starve forever. Crash diets do not work because they are poor examples to our kids.

Let's choose today to be good stewards of our health and good examples to our children. Let's eat what our kids are eating! Because we are choosing to feed them good, whole, nutritious foods!

Deidra Miller - Why Crash Diets Don't Work

There are many diets are there that are geared for rapid weight loss and can be effective for the short term, but most often they have no lasting results. A crash diet is usually very restrictive in calories and often in nutrients our bodies need to be energized and keep going. I have witnessed others crash dieting or doing very restrictive diets and they have good results initially, but as soon as they go off the diet, they gain most (if not all) of the weight back. If you aren't willing to make a lifestyle change, the diet won't work. Sure, taking something out of your diet to

lose weight might work, but if you aren't willing to keep it out, doesn't it seem obvious that the weight will come back on when you reintroduce it into your diet again? Also, while these "diets" may seem like they work (and they do for the short term), but they can actually do harm to your body at the same time. 1. Your metabolism can slow making it harder to lose weight. 2. It can cause the loss of lean tissues which can be dangerous especially around some vital organs. 3. Your body can eat through muscle to receive energy it isn't receiving. 4. It can affect your mood and behavior. 5. The weight will most likely come back unless maintained by a good diet and exercise. I have never tried a crash diet, but have seen enough results in others to know that they don't work. FIT is amazing! Teaching us and motivating us to make a lifestyle change not just a quick fix.

Sarah Rivera – Why Crash Diets Don't Work

I'm sure everyone has tried the unhealthy crash diets. I know I have. I lost 50 pounds doing the hcg drops 4 years ago. I felt great, or so I thought I did. I also lost a ton of hair because my body wasn't getting enough nutrients. 5 months later I got pregnant and ended up gaining 60 to 70 pounds back. I have learned you need to eat right and exercise if you want to lose weight the healthy way. Here is some info on Why Crash Diets Don't Work.

Crash diets do not work because they are impossible. The basic formula for most crash diets is to starve yourself, often of the nutrients and minerals that you need to sustain a healthy metabolism.

Starvation doesn't always include eating less than what we need, but not getting enough of the kinds of foods that we need. One of the reasons many people struggle with weight issues is because the body is craving these nutrients, but a diet of fake processed food is not meeting the needs of the body.

Whether you are on a crash diet or eating a lot of processed foods, the metabolic process is adversely affected. This can result in a host of problems, including weight gain.

When you go on a crash diet, the body responds by going into "starvation mode". Feeding our hunger, however, is not entirely about eating more or less, but eating

the kinds of real foods that the body needs, including traditional fats, protein, and carbohydrates as well as other nutrients.

Crash Diets are Stressful to The Metabolism

The body responds to nutrient starvation by storing fat, and when you go on a crash diet you end up fighting yourself in an effort to be healthy. On the one hand, the body may release endorphins and other hormones to help you cope with the physical stress. Your body is responding to starvation conditions, and doing everything it can to keep you alive — your body doesn't "know" that you are causing the condition yourself.

Secondly, because it is being starved, your body will release cortisol to cope, which also signifies and produces higher levels of stress that impacts your metabolism.

Stress hormones break down proteins from your muscles and bones, and over time your lean body tissues deteriorate. They also deny energy to lesser systems in the body — the kind that aren't important when you are trying to outrun a lion — like digestion and mood health. That's why poor digestion and low moods are some of the earliest symptoms of chronically high stress hormones."

Stress caused by a crash diet (nutrition starvation) can result in poor thyroid function, loss of muscle and bone mass, insomnia, blood sugar swings, high blood pressure, skin conditions such as eczema, a poorly functioning immune system and emotional problems such as depression. Last but not least, it often results ultimately in weight gain, particularly in the tummy.

Judi Newbold - Coconut Oil and Oil Pulling

The coconut is a fruit with many healing properties. For internal uses, an unrefined virgin coconut oil is the best. For external uses, the expeller pressed or other types of refined coconut oil will work. Coconut oil is a saturated fat and is NOT responsible for high cholesterol, heart problems, and obesity that we have been taught. After World War II, the United States declared hydrogenated oils to be the "healthier oils." In the article "The Real Truth About Coconut Oil," Jake Carney, Founder of the Alternative Daily, states that we should never consume the following four oils: Canola Oil (linked to muscular disorders and fatty

degeneration of the heart, kidneys, adrenals, and thyroid gland); Cottonseed oil (an industrial plant saturated with pesticides); Safflower oil (Previous studies found that substituting animal fats with vegetable oils would drop cholesterol levels, but failed to evaluate the high ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats. Now there is evidence that it may be cholesterol that kills, but omega-6's. The researchers re-evaluated their theories on saturated fat, cholesterol and heart disease and point the finger formerly dubbed "heart-healthy" omega-6 fatty acid.); and Soybean oil (the GMO food they tell you is safe. Asians enjoy soy in its fermented state and in much smaller quantities than we do. Ninety-three percent of American soy is GMO and what we consume is in its unfermented state. This has been linked to numerous conditions including thyroid damage and hormone disruption.).

Coconut oil contains the healthiest substance on earth - lauric acid, a saturated fat. It's used for treating viral infections. It is also used in food as a vegetable shortening and in manufacturing to make soap and shampoo.

Katie, from Wellnessmama.com, gives us 101 Uses for Coconut Oil. Each listing has more information on how to effectively use the coconut oil. It is a very informative website covering all kinds of topics from boosting your metabolism and losing weight to killing yeast infections to cooking recipes. There is so much to learn that you could spend days. She also offers a free book to you. Don't miss checking out this website!

In the August 25, 2014 issue of FIRST magazine, there is an article "Are Hidden Bacteria Making You Tired?" The article discusses using oils to detox your body. This is a centuries old Ayurvedic practice of oil pulling. Many stars are beginning to use this practice. FIRST has researched this and found that oil pulling is even better than the reviews have been stating. It is advised to use oil pulling for about 20 minutes a day. You put 2 tsp. of your oil in your mouth, swish and swirl, repeatedly sucking and "pulling" the oil between your teeth. Don't spit the oil into your sink which could cause clogged pipes. At first, I thought that I could never just put this oil in my mouth and swish it for a period of time, but actually, it doesn't taste that bad. In my reading, I learned that the oil pulling could even help and heal my cavities and gingivitis. I was skeptical, but after a period of a couple of weeks, I can't believe the difference with my teeth. It definitely is worth a try!

Marion Drouillard – Are Pilates & Yoga Good Exercise?

I've done some of both, mostly on my "I'm too sluggish/lazy/tired to make myself do cardio" days, lol. I feel like one major benefit of those two types is the fact that.. they can be done barefoot! Ha! Ok, kidding. But seriously, they're great if you need something lower impact, if you tweaked your knee running or something like that, they can help you get your exercise in without making an injury worse. From what I've read they are definitely not the first choice if your main goal is weight loss, though they do both have a number of other health benefits, such as building core strength, increasing flexibility, toning, reducing blood pressure.. I do shy away from yoga after doing some reading on it, every single pose is related to Hindu worship, oy. Not gonna preach that, just not comfortable with it myself. They are *not* aerobic exercises so people wanting to lose weight shouldn't rely on them exclusively- great for toning and strengthening but you'd have to do an awful lot of either one of them to see consistent weight loss doing these exercises alone. "Though vinyasa yoga, a heat-building style linking poses with your breath, burns roughly 600 calories per hour, it is not a form of yoga that most people will do every single day -- which is what would be necessary if your goal was to lose 1 lb. per week." Um, yeah, we want more results for less work or less time, please. So my answer.. are they good exercise? Yes (especially if dealing with injuries) but don't expect big changes on the scale without some other form of exercise as well.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/382164-which-is-better-for-weight-loss-yoga-or-pilates/>

Jamie Knopp - How to Get the Most From Your Workout

If you want to get the best out of your workout, you must:

1. Commit - nothing good in life comes easily. If you don't commit to doing your work out consistently and working as hard as you can, you will not see results.
2. Make a Plan - find out what has worked for people for years, and get into it! Use the cardio, use weight lifting, use boxing, use running, use circuit training - but start at the point where you are just beginning to push your body, and build up from there!
3. Stay on your Plan - of course we are back to the commitment here!
Don't let yourself quit when it gets hard. Just work a different part of your body if

you are sore. Find out what motivates you to keep at it, and USE that motivation as much and as often as necessary! (NOT FOOD!!!!) Is it a new dress that you've been longing to wear? A style that you've never looked good in? Maybe you have a big event coming up, wouldn't it be great to shock everyone there with your beautiful new body!! Maybe you are motivated by losing inches, or being able to do more lunges than you did the day before. Whatever it is - find it and don't let it go!

4. Team Up - this is why the 8-week FIT Challenge is AMAZING!!! We get the team spirit, and the competition all rolled into one! Together we are keeping one another fit, and I love it! Maybe you need to add on a local buddy?

5. Try New Things!!! This one is really what I have been learning on the challenge. My mind has been opened up to a few things thanks to you lovely ladies and the rules of the challenge. Pushing ourselves to HAVE to work out 5 days a week, and to HAVE to get in at least 45 minutes is a great motivator for trying something new! If you are a cardio girl - try strength training. If you usually do crossfit - try swimming! Just do something you've never done and your body will repay you!

6. Eat Something small before you work out. You need quality carbs, lean protein, heart-healthy fats, and fluids in order for your body to burn calories and fat properly (Web MD)

7. Get Plenty of Sleep. As someone mentioned who is doing that topic - you will want to eat more if you are tired, and you will also be tempted to skip your workout!

8. Start your workout with your favorite moves. This will help you to warm up happily, and likely keep you moving long enough for you to "Get into it"

9. Stop all work at least 3 hours before bed. Just as your body needs time to digest - it needs time to relax. You may feel that you will burn more calories by working right up until bedtime. However, you will actually sabotage your efforts by depriving your body of that much needed physical rest period.

10. ALWAYS stretch before and after. A great concept is complimentary stretches! We would like to lengthen the muscles that we worked out the hardest! A stretch prior to working out protects you from damage. The after workout stretch is for strength and length - it is miserable to walk around with stiff balled up muscles! Don't skip that GOOD stretch.

Rachel Gavey – The Best At-Home Workouts

I looked up Exercises for at home(something I keep forgetting to look up) and I found some cool stuff!!!! The first onso THE TOP "AT HOME" exercise was called" the SUPERMANS" Ha!!! Never heard of it!!! Now I have :o) I think it should

be called "SUPERWOMANS ". Most of the others I have done, seen or heard of. The part I struggle with is when to do them!!! We have a busy house and I'd rather not do it in front of the kids cause they want to make fun of me or do it with me . I just don't feel it's effective. That kinda leaves the mornings. We shall see.

This is the article I found earlier this week! It has so many different exercises . They are simple. I really enjoy that they show you how to do each one with a video. That is great cause sometimes I don't understand pictures:

ACEFITNESS.ORG

Liz Pritchett - How to Start Running

I have "started to run" multiple times(: Its always hard for me to get started and to keep going. I've never been one who "likes" to run, but I do enjoy the feeling after a good run. Here are some pointers that I found very helpful to me.

The right shoes are always important. I went to a store and was fitted for my running shoes and was very glad I did. I had started with some other shoes and regretted after a few miles. Also I got a few pairs or running socks and really like them. Pricy but worth it for me.

Start slow. You don't have to start with a minute mile, and you don't have to run a whole mile the first time you hit the road. All runners have times where they have to walk, so don't feel defeated due to this.

Get a partner. It always feels nice to know that someone is going through the same hardships as you. You can share your victories and struggles. And it helps keep you accountable.

Sign up for a race. This gives you a goal and keeps you training. If you know you have a deadline then you are less likely to skip that run or two.

Know that sometimes the treadmill will have to do. Sometimes rain or other circumstances keep you from going out. Just know that any kind of run is better than no run at all.

Eat healthy and stay hydrated. You all know why this is important.

For some finding a schedule that tells you how much and when to run is helpful. You know when it's time for a run and it gives you a steady increase in difficulty of each run so you know you are making progress

All in all know that everyone can be a runner. It doesn't always mean you won't walk here and there, but you are working your way to a healthier you! I always see a difference in the scale when I run, so that's a big motivator for me. I always try different tricks to help me keep going when I don't think I can take another step. I give myself short goals like the next light pole or get to that next car. I also start thanking for The Lord for all my blessings, I tell myself I can stop running when I can't find anything to thank God for any more(:

Hannah Moffett – How to Start Running

I chose to research this topic because it's something I have really been working on lately. I actually found a few things that I might be doing wrong too! I've never been a runner. Ever. And about 4 weeks ago one of my friends asked me to start training to do a tough mudder run with her so right now running is my main focus. I read a few articles about how to start training yourself to run and although they had many things to say, there were a few key things that were emphasized in each one.

1. Buy a good pair of running shoes

Every article I saw emphasized the importance of a good pair of shoes to help prevent stress on your joints or injury.

2. Eat right and drink plenty of water

It's so important to have a good diet when you are going to be exercising regularly. Of course that is something that FIT teaches already and is important no matter what, but if you don't follow a good diet your body will not be able to reach its full fitness potential.

3. Start out slow.

Don't push it. If you've never run before you're not going to be able to just jump on a treadmill or step outside and do it. Most of the websites I looked at recommended starting out with walking/running intervals and slowly increasing your time running and decreasing the time you walk.

4. Have a running partner

It can really help to have someone with you to help motivate you to achieve your goal.

There are plenty of ideas and methods out there to help you get started. I've only listed a few. But I believe the most important thing when it comes to any kind of fitness goal is to JUST DO IT. No matter what just determine that you are going to make it to your goal. Whether that's being able to run or getting to a certain goal weight or simply just getting back in shape and getting better habits for your life, you won't accomplish anything until you determine you are going to start today to work towards that goal. Right now I'm working on running and researching this topic really helped. FIT has really motivated me to just make myself start working toward my goals no matter how hard it is or how long it takes.

Michelle Price - How to Start Running (from Runnersworld.com)

I have always admired those people that love to run. Those that get a 'high' from exercise. But that has never been me. I want to run, I WANT to like it. But, I don't-not in the least. I always feel like an elephant on the treadmill. Like the pounding of my footsteps echos throughout the entire gym. So this post is self-serving.

Maybe I have been trying to run all wrong. Instead of just getting on the treadmill and running, maybe I should be using a system. Here is what I found:

Start with run/walks. Instead of just going out and running till you pass out, use a system of running/walking. Add short bouts of running to your walking and gradually increase. Start by running for one minute for every four minutes walked.

Don't get TOO excited. Don't go too far too fast. You can be injured by doing too much too soon. Don't increase distance more than 10% per week to stay injury free.

Listen to your body. Some soreness is to be expected, as with any new exercise or physical exertion. However, you should never ignore sharp pains or pains that persist or get worse as you walk or run. Rest for three days if you experience any of these symptoms, or go see your doctor.

Fashion is not for the feet. Sure, we all want to look cute when we exercise (not that I ever do), but the right fit for a running shoe is more important than making sure they match your outfit. Pay the price for a good pair and replace your shoes

every 300-500 miles (at my current rate of non-running, I my shoes should last a good five years. lol)

Keep your calories in balance. According to the article I read, your half of the calories on your plate should be from complex carbohydrates (fruits, veggies, whole grains). One quarter of the calories should be from unsaturated fats (avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil). Lean protein is the remaining quarter of your plate (lean poultry, fish, eggs).

There was also a running plan that you could download to help you get started. Who knows, maybe I'll try that? And maybe I'll replace that 0.0 sticker on the back of my car with a 13.1 sticker. Good luck ladies. Stay FIT!

Rachael Werstak – Triathlons

My research was how to start training/ why to do Triathlons.

This is a subject near and dear to my heart (background I started racing a year ago and become completely hooked. It has changed my health and family's health). The biggest challenge was actually getting myself into a bathing suit and sucking up any embarrassment I had and just doing it. Once you realize everyone is in spandex and most people are too worried about their own performance to really even care, the rest is easy. There are people of all ages, body types, and fitness levels -- so yes, you too can be a Triathlete!

- 1) Triathlons are a full body workout with 3 sports swim, bike, run. training each 2-3 x week no one body part gets to fatigued.
- 2) Even a beginner can finish one with 8-12 weeks of training
- 3) There are great distances for beginner with a mini sprint (250 m swim, 8-10 mile bike, 2 mile run) or sprint (650-850m swim, 12-16 mile bike, 5k).
- 4) You will be able to train even with kids and work! (it's about making time -- not always having it)
- 5) To get started follow a training plan (there are many available on the internet)
- 6) You really do not need much to start (swim suit, goggles, any bike, helmet, running shoes)
- 7) Swimming is key, make this a priority
 - it tones your body and increases your metabolism
 - it's a total body workout
 - joint friendly

-muscle lengthening activity (combines cardio with resistance)

8) IT'S FUN!!!!

Some good websites to look at to get started:

www.beginnertriathlete.com

www.livestrong.com, www.swimbikemom.com

Sandra Hoffert – Animal-Based vs Plant-Based Foods

My research topic is Animal-based vs Plant based foods....Okay girls, Hang on to your hat!! I just watched "Forks over Knives" ... If you have Netflix You HAVE to watch it....I also have read this topic in the book Eat to Live.... Now let me just say that this is a hard pill to swallow for a girl from rural Iowa!!! Before you freak out... think of how many farmers/ and people from rural areas that have heart problems and cancer.... I KNOW It is EVERYWHERE, but I look back into my family..... all of my grandparents and also my parents were raised on a farm... We had home grown beef, pork, chicken, fresh eggs, milk and cream..... they also ALL have had major health issues.... that's my background here's just a tiny bit of what I've found..... in the eastern countries of the world... they have for most of their existence eaten plant based foods... and were VERY healthy... just a very small percentage of cancer and heart issues... then they started becoming westernized and they have documentation that shows cancer and heart disease skyrocketing. In WW2 the Germans took over Norway and immediately took all the farm animals away from the people to meet the needs of the soldiers. When they did, the deaths from heart attacks and strokes declined drastically..... when the Norwegians were able to get their animals back .. Immediately the death rate shot up again..... Cholesterol is ONLY found in animal based foods and it the MAIN cause of all coronary artery disease.... Being a very heavy almost 60 yr old that has eaten the traditional SAD diet all of her life.... I think this is a wake up call..... I am not liking it a BIT but..... after reading Eat to Live and then watching the documentary... I think I really need to at least cut down and try to get it completely out of my diet.... WE all think we have to have dairy for calcium and meat from protein..... this information shows us that THAT is really NOT true, it is just what we have been told and believed all of our lives and MOST important.... WHAT TASTES GOOD to us! I am certainly NOT a writer and have a hard time getting things organized as I am writing so I HOPE you can make some sense of all

this... but Just watch the documentary and read the book.... at least you will have something to think about !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Keep an open mind :O)

Crystal Olewine – Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fats

There are 4 main types of fats: Saturated, Monounsaturated, Polyunsaturated, and Trans fats. Fats have a poor reputation because they are bad for you in large quantities, but fats are an essential part of our diet. Its more than the amount of fat, it's the types of fat you eat that really matter! Bad fats increase your risk of certain diseases while good fats actually help your overall health. Bad fats which we should limit would be saturated fats: high fat cuts of meat, poultry with the skin, dairy products, butter, and ice cream. Trans fats are bad fats as well which we should always seek to avoid: commercially-baked pastries, cookies, doughnuts, snack foods, margarine, fried foods, and candy bars. Good fats would include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats: olive oil, avocados, nuts, olives, fatty fish, soymilk, and peanut butter. Another helpful tip I found out is that saturated and trans fats tend to be solid at room temp, but monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats tend to be liquid at room temp. My ultimate conclusion from the many different sites I've researched is that it's all about moderation...even the good fats because they too still have calories! Also its important to read your labels carefully! And something I've already learned from being a part of FIT is that it's always better to go "full-fat" with your dairy and limit the amount, as opposed to going with "low-fat" or "non-fat."

Sarah Van Horn - Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fats

There are many different types of fats. It is important to know which ones are good for you and which ones are bad for your body. Some fats are found in foods from plants and animals are known as dietary fat. Dietary fat provides energy for your body. Some vitamins, for instance, must have fat to dissolve and nourish your body. However, Fat is also high in calories and small amounts can add up quickly. If you eat more calories than you need, you will gain weight. Excess weight is linked to poor health.

Bad fats:

You want to stay away from saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats come mainly

from red meats, poultry and dairy. Most trans fats are created from oils that have been processed.

Good fats:

Monounsaturated fats come from a variety of different foods and oils. They can actually improve your blood cholesterol levels.

Polyunsaturated fat is found mostly in plant based foods and oils. It too can lower blood cholesterol levels and decrease risk of heart disease.

Omega three fatty acids are found in some types of fatty fish and are found to protect against coronary artery disease and help lower blood pressure. Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel, sardines and herring. Plant sources of omega-3 fatty acids include flaxseed (ground), oils (canola, flaxseed, soybean), and nuts and other seeds (walnuts, butternuts, and sunflower).

Juli McLain – Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fats

When one is dieting, we tend to avoid *all* fat like it is bad bad bad. But this makes us tend to eat more protein, which makes us hungrier faster and grumpy and then we give up. Not the desired result!

Everyone knows what the unhealthy fats are....vegetable oil, crisco, etc. The stuff that is processed and makes junk food and french fries taste so good!

I am going to list some healthy fats, and I wonder if you will be as surprised as I was:

Butter. Yep, good old supposed to be bad for you butter. I am already sold on never eating margarine again, so I was pleased to see that my old friend butter, IN MODERATION Paula Deen, is not bad. It is a good fat.

Pass on the white meat and pick the dark. We think those chicken breasts are better? Nope, choose that fatty thighs and also salmon <yuk>

Eggs, nuts and avocados. Eggs are such a perfect food....eat them to add fat that is healthy. And fry them in butter. And who doesn't love a good guacamole once in a while!

Fatty cheese. Y'all can have this one, I am not really a cheese girl.

Bacon. This one speaks for itself. I would mention, this is also very high in sodium so again, the word is moderation.

Best for last.....DARK CHOCOLATE. Yes, ladies, indulge once in a while. Don't eat the entire giant sized bar, but keep a bar in the freezer and if you see you need more fat for the day, eat a square!

So I have concluded that the fats that God made are meant to be eaten in small amounts. Word of the day: MODERATION. Eat a little, don't go overboard. It shouldn't be the mainstay of your diet, but you do need a little healthy fat.

Denise Minge – Good Fats vs. Bad Fats

In the early part of the twenty-first century, some studies were published that promoted the idea of a low-fat diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. These studies said that saturated fat from any animal source was bad for your health and should be avoided. It made sense --- eat fat, and you'll get fat --- and people tried it. However, heart disease and other degenerative diseases rose in direct relationship to the reduction of consumption of healthy fats. Surveys of traditional societies such as the Masai tribe in Africa, Eskimos, and the Japanese have shown that people who eat saturated fat from butter, beef, fish, and other animal sources have extremely low incidence of heart disease, arthritis, tooth decay, and numerous other health problems (Nourishing Traditions, p 6).

Saturated fats are necessary for our bodies to function properly. Our bones, teeth, liver, immune system, reproductive systems, and cell membranes all need saturated fat.

What are bad fats? Bad fats are margarine, vegetable oil, canola oil, safflower, corn, sunflower, soybean, and cottonseed oil. Peanut oil and sesame oil are not as bad, but should be limited. These bad fats have been processed by high heat and treated with solvents. Any antioxidants, like vitamin E, that might have been in these fats are destroyed by the high temperatures. In order to replace the vitamin E, BHT and BHA are sometimes added to the oils; however, both of these additives are suspected of causing cancer and brain damage. The high heat processing also can create free radicals in the oil. These COULD be neutralized by

the vitamin E, if it hadn't been destroyed by the extreme processing. A safe method of extracting oil is expeller pressing. Olive oil is processed this way and as long as it is not exposed to light or oxygen will keep its antioxidant qualities.

What are good fats? Olive oil, butter, flax seed oil (if kept refrigerated and used in limited amounts), and coconut oil are the most common good fats. Olive oil should be kept in a dark place and should be a golden yellow color. Duck or goose fat, lard from pastured pigs, beef tallow and chicken fat are also fine, but probably not as common or as readily available. Fat from certain animals should be used only if they have been pasture raised, not feed-lot raised, since animals who have eaten pesticide-treated grain or have been treated with antibiotics or hormones will pass that on in their meat and fat.

Certain vitamins are best absorbed by our bodies if they are delivered in the right form. For instance, butter, especially from grass-fed cows (Kerry-gold is a good brand) contains vitamin A and E. Wild-caught salmon is another good source of good fat and vitamins. Eggs from pastured chickens contain more vitamins and omega-3s than commercially raised chicken eggs. (Plus, they taste way better! I love my backyard birdies!)

Children especially need good fats for their developing brains and bodies. It's an investment to me to provide the right nutrition for my kids.

Sources: <http://news.psu.edu/story/166143/2010/07/20/research-shows-eggs-pastured-chickens-may-be-more-nutritious>

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon and Mary Enig
<http://holisticsquid.com/butter-is-better/>

Susan Randall – Importance of Sleep for Weight Loss

I am doing my research on the importance of getting a good night's sleep and weight loss. I chose this subject, because when I do not get enough sleep at night my health is immediately affected by that. So, how does lack of sleep interfere with your weight loss efforts? Well, to begin with your body has a hormone called Ghrelin, which is your "go" hormone that tells you when to eat. You also have a hormone called Leptin, which tells you when to stop eating. When you are sleep

deprived your body creates more Ghrelin and less Leptin, which = weight gain. When you do not get enough sleep you are more likely to make poor diet choices...you need coffee to function, you don't feel like working out and rather than fighting the temptation to not eat junk food, you are more likely to give in. Sleep deprivation can also increase the risk of diabetes. Here are 9 effects of sleep deprivation:

- 1) Sleepiness causes accidents.
- 2) Sleep loss dumbs you down. It impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving.
- 3) Sleep deprivation can lead to serious health problems: Heart disease, Heart attack, Heart failure, High blood pressure, Stroke, and Diabetes. *All of those problems, except stroke run in my family...a good reason not to help move things along.
- 4) Sleepiness is depressing. Insomnia and depression feed on each other. "...For the joy of the LORD is your strength". Neh. 8:10
- 5) Lack of sleep ages your skin. Chronic sleep loss can lead to lackluster skin, fine lines and dark circles under the eyes. Not very pretty, ladies!
- 6) Sleepiness makes you forgetful. * Ok...I have problems with this regardless of if I have a good nights sleep or not:)
- 7) Losing sleep can make you gain weight. Not only does it stimulate your appetite, but it also increases cravings for high-fat and high carbohydrate foods.
- 8) Lack of sleep may increase risk of death. Lack of sleep doubled the risk of death from cardiovascular disease.
- 9) Sleep loss impairs judgment, especially about sleep. The longer you "function" on 4-5 hrs of sleep per night, the more you think you can handle it, but studies have shown that people who survive on little sleep do not do well on tests and are more like to make poor decisions.

The various articles that I read recommended at least 7.5 - 8 hours of sleep per night. Just because you sleep for 8 hrs per night does not mean that you will automatically lose tons of weight, however when you get a proper amount of sleep you are more likely to do what's right throughout the day, which over time can equal losing lots of weight. So, I hope that each of you ladies sleep peacefully tonight!

Ange Richmond – Why a Good Night's Sleep is Important for Weight loss: Why Sleep Is Essential To Weight-Loss & Stress Management (from Mindbodygreen)

Tiredness, stress, and exhaustion can often trigger food binges. We reach for a snack in order to get an energy boost, when really our bodies are letting us know that we need a rest or some down-time. We often push past the signals to rest, but this can lead to problems when it comes to eating.

Sleep impacts the hormones that regulate our appetite. Short sleep is associated with higher levels of the appetite-stimulating hormone ghrelin and lower levels of the appetite-sating hormone leptin, so getting too little sleep can actually increase our appetite. Too little sleep can also impact insulin, which has all kinds of effects on the body, blood sugar, and food cravings. Short sleep can also mean higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn impacts insulin, setting up a vicious cycle in the body that often leaves us turning to food.

Sleep is important for our bodies for so many reasons; it not only impacts our appetite, it can also influence our food choice. During times when we're tired, stressed, and depressed we tend to choose less healthy food options, which are often high in sugary carbohydrates and low in nutrient-rich vegetables and fruits. Eating these sugary foods can impact our blood sugar levels, which causes us to crave more sugar!

Evidence seems to suggest we need to get between seven and nine hours of sleep per night. If we're well rested, we naturally feel better mentally and are more able to choose healthy lifestyle behaviors, compared to when we're sleep deprived and foggy headed.

Personally, I know that when I don't get enough high-quality sleep my stress levels elevate and my coping strategies diminish. I also tend to become quite emotional and notice that my appetite increases. During these times, I know I need to reassess and make sleep a self-care priority.

The following ideas might help you to create a good sleep routine:

Turn off your phone and computer by 8 p.m. — this allows for reduced stimulation before bed and can help with better-quality sleep.

Take time in the evening to journal, sit in silence, meditate, or pray - this can help

prevent the events of the day going around and around in your head at night time.

Read a relaxing book rather than watching an action movie before sleep.

If you currently sleep less than seven hours a night, commit to going to bed 20 minutes earlier.

Take time to physically move your body during the day — go for a walk, do some yoga, dance. This may help you fall asleep more easily. Do avoid exercise in the two hours before sleep, though, as this can be stimulating rather than relaxing.

Speak to your close friends during the day. Sharing our thoughts, concerns, joys, and news helps us to feel a part of something larger, which can help reduce stress in our lives.

Kristen Green – Why a Good Night's Sleep is Important for Weight Loss

First of all, I know for me personally that I used to stay up late EVERY night with the excuse that it was "ME" time. One of the biggest problems with that is I always had a snack. I would buy special treats for myself and eat them after the kids were in bed. I never felt rested, even on days that I could sleep in. I had pretty bad habits and was really not sure I could break them. When I started this challenge and couldn't eat past 9 p.m., that is when I started changing things. The amount of sleep that we get seriously affects 2 hormones that in turn affect our appetites. Ghrelin increases our appetites which can lead to weight gain. Leptin holds back our appetites and assists with weight loss. When we have a lack of sleep however, that disturbs the hormonal balance. The result? We have increased ghrelin and lower leptin levels, which in turn leads to weight gain. Turning off the television and reducing the amount of food you eat before bed will aid you in getting a good night's sleep. It can be difficult to break some of these bad habits. I have never been a morning person, but as I have learned some of these things, I have discovered I accomplish a lot more when I am fully rested and am eating properly.

Terri Schaefer – Why A Good Night's Sleep is Important for Weight Loss

When your body is sleep deprived, it suffers from "metabolic grogginess." Within just four days of sleep deprivation, your body's ability to properly use insulin (the

master storage hormone) becomes completely disrupted. In fact, the University of Chicago researchers found that insulin sensitivity dropped by more than 30 percent. Here's why that's bad: When your insulin is functioning well, fat cells remove fatty acids and lipids from your blood stream and prevent storage. When you become more insulin resistant, fats (lipids) circulate in your blood and pump out more insulin. Eventually this excess insulin ends up storing fat in all the wrong places, such as tissues like your liver. And this is exactly how you become fat and suffer from diseases like diabetes. Leptin is a hormone that is produced in your fat cells. The less leptin you produce, the more your stomach feels empty. The more ghrelin you produce, the more you stimulate hunger while also reducing the amount of calories you burn (your metabolism) and increasing the amount fat you store. In other words, you need to control leptin and ghrelin to successfully lose weight, but sleep deprivation makes that nearly impossible. Research published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism found that sleeping less than six hours triggers the area of your brain that increases your need for food while also depressing leptin and stimulating ghrelin. If that's not enough, the scientists discovered exactly how sleep loss creates an internal battle that makes it nearly impossible to lose weight. When you don't sleep enough, your cortisol levels rise. This is the stress hormone that is frequently associated with fat gain. Cortisol also activates reward centers in your brain that make you want food. At the same time, the loss of sleep causes your body to produce more ghrelin. A combination of high ghrelin and cortisol shut down the areas of your brain that leave you feeling satisfied after a meal, meaning you feel hungry all the time—even if you just ate a big meal.

Lack of sleep also pushes you in the direction of the foods you know you shouldn't eat. A study published in Nature Communications found that just one night of sleep deprivation was enough to impair activity in your frontal lobe, which controls complex decision-making. So basically because of this you will choose the wrong foods to eat. I know this is a lot of why I can't lose weight, because I don't sleep well.

Katie Nichols – Leaky Gut

I researched leaky gut this week because it was something I didn't know a lot about, but I've heard people talk about. Here's what I found:

WHAT IS IT? Leaky gut is when substances in the gut (or small intestine) leak through to the bloodstream. All sorts of things like bacteria, toxins, viruses, etc. can leak through and enter the body incorrectly. The body's immune system reacts causing inflammation. It can also cause nutritional deficiencies because the absorbing process in the gut has been damaged.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? Bloating, gas, cramping, food sensitivities, achy joints, and rashes. Symptoms can be similar to celiac and Crohn's disease.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED? First of all, leaky gut isn't a clearly defined illness like cancer and can't be diagnosed with 100% certainty. This is a disease that is more likely to be diagnosed by an alternative medicine doctor than a family physician. There is no test to show that someone has a leaky gut, but Intestinal Permeability Test is sometimes used to indicate if someone possibly has a leaky gut.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE? Several of the articles I read said that no one is sure of the cause, however, diets high in sugar, chronic stress, processed foods, some medication, and gluten can trigger this problem for some people.

HOW IS IT CURED? Some doctors recommend taking glutamine pills, but there is no research that this really works. Diet seems to make the biggest difference. Eating anti-inflammatory foods seem to help considerably. No sugar, artificial sweeteners, dairy, or gluten. Eating lots of green vegetables, fermented foods, and foods high in fiber help with the symptoms. People who think they have a leaky gut and change their diet usually see improvement within 6 weeks, but it may take years to completely heal.

Sources:

<http://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/features/leaky-gut-syndrome?page=2>

<http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/could-leaky-gut-be-troubling-you?page=3>

Melissa Schworer - Saving Money While Eating Whole

In researching how to cut your grocery bill when eating whole foods, I came up with the following.

This was my process and my choices. Obviously each family / person would choose their own priorities. Before anything, I prayed. This cut back was a need in our family and I was afraid at the learning, cutting and new recipes that would go into it.

Here is what I felt led to do:

1. Decide what are the minimal per person

- a. 2 cups fruit
- b. 2 cups vegetables
- c. .25 lb meat
- d. Beans
- e. "Whole carbs" (Potatoes, Rice, Bread)
- f. Dairy

By doing this, I believe we can knock off \$60 a week (\$240 a month WHOA!) from our groceries.

Cut out more expensive cuts of meat.

Took out cheese

Limited our meat protein source to .25 per person a day and replaced it with beans.

Doing two meatless days a week.

2. Decide what "extras" you feel are important and how much you are willing to spend on each.

- a. Get together,
- b. Dates,
- c. Bake a "whole food sweet treat" with one child each week
- d. A daily coffee (for my hubby and I both), and a small homemade chocolate milk each day for our kids.

2. Figure out your price point.

Mine is \$2.00 or less a pound of anything.

3. Understand the staples of your existing meal plan.

- a. Smoothies for breakfast (FRUIT)
 - b. Veggies and Carb and Fat for lunch
 - c. Coffee (snack)
 - d. Protein, Veggies and Carb for dinner
 - e. Protein or Dairy for night snack
4. Find good deals on those things.
 5. Create a recipe meal plan AROUND your deals
 6. Don't eat out.
 7. Only drink water.
 8. Make snacking a premeditated choice BEFORE you go to the store and buy for those snack only.

EXTRA:

9. Make a list of all your non-food items. Start using coupons for those (in moderation) and check out amazon.mom for discounted savings (if you have amazonprime).

Debbie Fredericks - Cost Efficient Ways to Healthy Eating

I read two articles with most having common sense principles we all know, such as the following:

1. Prepare ahead of time.
2. Buy fruit and veggies in season.
3. Buy bulk on dry goods such as rice, beans, etc...
4. Stock up when lean meats on sale divide it up and freeze.
5. Don't buy individual packaged foods.
6. Don't spend money on juices and sodas.

I could go on with a few more but basically it's what I and all of us already know but don't necessarily always put into practice. After reading these articles I basically came to my own conclusions, as follows:

1. We spend money on what we value. It's a matter of what is important.
 2. While we might spend more on something healthy if we are not spending on the extra fast food/ drink run throughs, we are actually coming out ahead. Water is Free!
- .99 bag of carrots is cheaper than junk/fast food.

3. Healthy food fills you, therefore you are not eating as much. I bought 2 loaves of Ezekiel bread and of course froze it. I don't eat it everyday and therefore it lasted for 3 weeks. In actuality it's only \$2.00 more than the regular bread which doesn't last as long.

4. Bottom line it's all in our frame of mind. I have found I must admit I think I save money with less junk in the house. Aldi has a lot for cheap!

Now need to put into practice what I have learned.

Diane Bender – Protein

I did my research on protein. I'm pretty sure people have college degrees on this subject, but I'll try to summarize the basics of what I read! Protein is needed for many bodily functions and since our bodies don't store protein, we need it daily. It builds, maintains, and repairs muscles. It also keeps our blood levels steady and it is important to maintaining a healthy immune system.

Our bodies build protein from amino acids. We get amino acids from the protein that we eat. We make some amino acids from scratch, but others must come from food sources. The ones we cannot make ourselves are called "essential" amino acids. Proteins that contain all 9 of the amino acids that our bodies can't make are called complete proteins. Other proteins (incomplete proteins) are low in certain amino acids, so it is beneficial to eat a variety of them to get all of the essential amino acids that we need. However, it is now known that variety is not necessary, you would just have to eat a lot of a certain incomplete protein to get enough of the amino acid in which it is low. Animal sources are usually complete proteins.

Signs of not getting enough protein include: 1. Craving sweets, not feeling full, and experiencing brain fog. This is because protein keeps our blood levels steady. 2. Hair falling out. 3. Feeling weak. Muscles may be shrinking. 4. Getting sick constantly and having hangnails (due to weak immune system). However, over and over I've read that there has been too much emphasis on eating more protein. In the US most people do not lack protein in their diets. Instead of quantity the emphasis should be on quality. We need to look at what comes with

the protein. For example, a 6 oz. porterhouse steak has 40 g of protein, but also 12 g of saturated fat. A 6 oz. ham steak has only 2.5 g of saturated fat, but 2000 mg of sodium. 1 cup of lentils has 18 g of protein, 15 g of fiber, and nearly no fat or sodium. Again, quality matters more than quantity. Also, food sources are best, but supplements can be used for convenience.

Even though most of what I read said there has been too much emphasis on getting more protein, we should be getting protein immediately after workouts. Even then though, the protein should be eaten with carbs in a 4-5:1 ratio of carbs to protein.

There are benefits to increasing healthy protein. One study did show that replacing healthy carbs with healthy protein lowered blood pressure and LDL cholesterol. Weight loss was the same with either diet. A normal recommendation is that about 10% of our calories should come from protein, but I will attach an article that explains how increasing that amount to about 30% can help us lose weight.

If anyone wants sources for what I've written, I have them.

<http://authoritynutrition.com/how-much-protein-per-day/>

Diana Stivers - The Best Superfoods

This topic intrigued me because I am a busy wife and mom of 3, a missionary, a piano teacher, and have a few more responsibilities as well. I am looking for ways to become healthier by incorporating certain foods into my diet that are cheap, quick and easy, yet amazing for my health! This is the best and most informative article I found on the subject.

There are some surprises in this article as well! For instance, did you know that there is research that suggests your calcium levels can have an impact on your weight loss? A good rule of thumb to remember when it comes to making sure you're getting enough antioxidants is: "the darker the color, the more antioxidants, the better it is for your health." Also, CHOCOLATE is good for me!! Yay!! It's all about the color of the chocolate and being balanced in the amount you eat. Again, the darker the chocolate, the better for you. So many superfood are delicious, easy to incorporate into a dinner or snack.

Just by adding in berries, beans, fish, pumpkin, and tea (these are my favorites), we could all see dramatic changes to our health and weight loss, both now, and for the future.

Now, I'm just waiting for *coffee* to be added to that list. Haha! (In my dreams, I know)

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/superfoods-everyone-needs#>

Susan Rodgers - The Best Superfoods

People have different definitions of the word superfood. Some believe it's nothing more than a marketing term used to sell a gimmick. Others believe it's used to describe foods that are particularly nutritious that carry more benefits than the average food item. Since this is how I define superfood this is how I am approaching the topic. A quick google or pinterest search will come up with acai berries, maca, goji berries, quinoa or some other newfound exotic plant. While these can be beneficial when incorporated into a balanced and varied diet, (and compared to processed food they certainly are superfoods) a lot of these superfood claims are more marketing claims to those who are desperate for a cure for some illness or who are looking to lose a quick pound and they do not have the research to support all the claims that are being made. There are a number of foods that have been regarded as sacred through the test of time and recent research does reveal their benefits as something that could be classified as "superfoods." Most of these were eaten daily by our ancestors, and were especially given to the sick, and to pregnant and nursing women, because of how beneficial they are to health, growth, and development. Most of these were pushed aside because of the industrialization of our food supply and by the "low fat diet revolution" but as all the low fat claims have been disproven and we learn how harmful processed food can be, many are reincorporating these superfoods into healthy diets. So I submit these superfoods:

1. Cod Liver Oil (preferably fermented)- Cod liver is saturated in vitamins A and D. (note, real fat soluble vitamin A is not toxic like beta carotene or synthetic vitamin A can be). The standard American diet is deficient in both of these vital nutrients. Vitamins A and D are used in almost every process in the body and are vital to wellbeing. Cod liver oil builds the immune system, and is a great thing to take

when fighting any sickness. It is helpful in treating chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. The fatty acids are essential to the brain and nervous system. There is also evidence to suggest that cod liver oil is useful in treating obesity, hypertension, insulin resistance, adult onset diabetes, depression and stroke. It is also known for contributing to bone health and skin quality.

2. Liver (pastured)- Liver is full of vitamins! Liver contains more nutrients, gram for gram than any other food. It is a high quality protein, is concentrated with Vitamin A, has the entire b-vitamin spectrum, particularly vitamin b12(which many Americans are deficient in), and it contains a highly useable form of iron as well as trace minerals such as copper, zinc and chromium. It also contains CoQ10, which is great for cardiovascular function. Liver also contains a well documented but unidentified anti-fatigue factor and is a favored food of professional athletes.

3. Bone Marrow (pastured)- Bone Marrow is very helpful to the lining of the gut, protecting it from or healing it from leaky gut which is the cause of numerous allergies, inflammation, and autoimmune conditions. Bone stock contains minerals in a highly absorbable form, including calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, silicon, sulfur and trace minerals. Gelatin has been found to be useful in the treatment of peptic ulcers, tuberculosis, diabetes, muscle diseases, infectious diseases, jaundice and cancer as well as digestive problems.

4. Eggs (pastured)- Nature's multivitamin. The whites are a good source of protein and the yolks have numerous vitamins and minerals as well as beneficial fats and cholesterol for hormone production. One yolk contains vitamins A, K, E, D, B-complex, iron, phosphorus, potassium, calcium and choline. It contains lutein and zeaxanthin in a more bioavailable form than from vegetables or supplements, combating vision issues, protecting the skin from sun damage and reducing ones risk of colon and breast cancer.

5. Lacto-Fermented foods- The old fashioned way of getting probiotics. Fermented foods provide the body with, numerous probiotics, enzymes, antioxidants and additional vitamins that wouldn't be received from eating just raw fruits and vegetables. Probiotics seal the gut and protect it from becoming leaky. Sealing the gut can heal allergies, and many autoimmune conditions. As growing research points to some neurological issues being affected by the gut,

lacto fermented foods have shown to alleviate some neurological problems. Lacto-fermented foods relieve constipation, promote lactation and overall well being. They are also very detoxifying to the body

I can say from my own experience, even though I had already been on a whole foods diet for a number of years, after a year of intentionally adding in these superfoods to my diet, I saw my allergies disappear, my mood improve, my heart palpitations disappear, my hormones improve and with that my cycles shorten and regulate (from 56 days to 31 days...and I believe they will continue to shorten until I'm down to a regular 28-29 day cycle), my constipation decrease, my energy increase, my immunity increase (my husband and I are the only ones at church who did not get the flu, strep throat, one of the many stomach bugs, or colds that kept getting passed around to everyone else) and last but not least, at the age of 27 I grew an inch (I stopped growing at the age of 13 so this is a big deal for me). Through historical case studies of people groups around the world, current research, and personal experience, I believe this is a good list of superfoods.

<http://www.westonaprice.org/.../cod-liver-oil-the-number-one.../>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/.../abcs-of-nutri.../vitamin-a-saga/>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/health-topics/the-liver-files/>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/health-topi.../broth-is-beautiful/>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/.../why-broth-is-beautiful-essen.../>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/.../eat-your-eggs-and-have-your-.../>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/.../who-needs-soda-pop-with-these.../>

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon

Juli Turner - The Best Superfoods

What is a super food?

It is a nutrient-rich food considered to be especially beneficial for health and well-being.

Some of the best super foods for weight loss:

1. Black beans: black beans contain a lot of protein which helps us feel full. It also contains fiber. One cup of black beans has half of what we need for our daily fiber. Another positive is that they are cheap! It is a great food for any budget. Canned beans are great time saver, but oftentimes they are higher in sodium and lower in nutrition. Here is a tip about using dried beans: make and freeze!

Article about freezing beans:

<http://www.kitchentreaty.com/how-to-cook-dried-beans-and-f.../>

2. Oats: oats contain a lot of fiber, and it is a healthy carb. They also help with cholesterol. Most importantly, they are a whole grain. Below is a definition to help us better understand what a whole grain is and why it is good for us.

"Whole Grains contains all three layers of the edible grain, bran, endosperm, and germ. Wholegrains mean you are getting all 3 parts of the grain in the same proportions as they are naturally found. Wholegrains retain the natural vitamins and minerals than are often removed from refined grains, which are just the starchy, endosperm component found in white flour or white bread or pasta."

3. Avocado: avocados are high in fat. It is said that avocados are the fat that helps you lose fat. Avocados stabilize blood sugar levels, and it has twice the potassium as a banana. Below is some recipe ideas with avocado.

<http://greatist.com/.../39-deliciously-unexpected-healthy-avo...>

4. Blueberries: blueberries are high in fiber. They lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart problems, and they enhance our memory.

5. Almonds: almonds are a healthy fat that helps you feel full. They are a great go-to snack! Craving something sweet? Grab a handful of almonds to help curb that appetite. Almonds are the most nutritionally dense nut. They are good for your heart, and helps with weight loss. Are you tired of just eating a handful of nuts like a squirrel? Here is a recipe for almond butter to mix it up!

Almond butter:

2 cups roasted almonds

1/2 tablespoon vanilla extract 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon 1 tablespoon olive oil

Place the almonds in the bowl of a food processor and process until finely ground.

Add the rest of the ingredients and blend for a few minutes at a time, making sure to scrape the sides of the food processor bowl frequently (if the mixture sticks).

Process for about 5-7 minutes, or until smooth and creamy.

Store in a closed jar or container.

In conclusion, superfood play an important role in our overall health. We should make it a goal to get in several super foods every day. Sometimes we will get bored eating the same foods, but get creative!

Works cited:

Health.com

Greatist.com

Hannah Bailey - The Best Superfoods

I decided to go with the best super-foods. It seems I'm always lacking these in my diet and want to do better at incorporating them into my daily diet. There are many super-foods out there and I have found at least 13 thus far but to save on time and space I am going to leave you with 5 super-foods and the reason why they are top of the list.

1. Avocados: Although they are high in fat they have healthful monounsaturated fats. These delicious little things aid in blood and tissue regeneration, stabilize blood sugar and are great for heart disorder (Ed Bauman Ph.D, Bauman College"

2. Apples: Apples are loaded with the powerful antioxidant which protect cells from damage. Reduces the risk of cancer. You know the phrase... "an apple a day..."

3. Blueberries: they are loaded with antioxidants that have been shown to better our vision and brain activity. They also can reduce inflammations!

4. Cabbage: In the vegetable world, cabbage is the most impressive of the lot. Cabbage contains compounds called indoles which can reduce the risk of cancer.

5. Garlic: Research shows that garlic lowers cholesterol and blood fat levels that help prevent clogged arteries.

These are just a few out of the powerful super-foods list. I like to think of the motto: "You are what you eat."

Beth Gornushenko - The Best Superfoods

Superfoods - What are they and what makes them SUPER???

I grew up eating mostly packaged, processed food and not realizing it was a problem. Open a package of this and that, put it on the stove or microwave and "Viola!" Dinner! I knew that excess sugar and fast food was bad but that's about it. Then... I GOT MARRIED! To a foreigner (Kazakhstan - former Russian) no less. He was appalled by the amount of obesity here in America and when I made dinner. Well, he was not impressed. I was confused when he said opening packages wasn't cooking and didn't know what to do. Fast forward almost 14 years. We now are still married, have 3 children, and I am still wondering what to make for dinner. I decided to do the research on Superfoods because well, it sounds great. Of course superfoods would be wonderful it's even in the name!! Problem. As I researched I found so many lists of what is considered superfoods. Everyday Health Media LLC lists the following: Avocado, apples, blueberries, cabbage, fish (and fish oil), garlic, mushrooms, almonds, eggs, flaxseeds, pomegranates, red wine and DARK CHOCOLATE (yeah!). But Greatlist author Kate Morin from Jan. 2012 lists the following: Greek yogurt, quinoa, blueberries, kale, chia, oatmeal, green tea, broccoli, strawberries, salmon, watermelon, spinach, pistachios, eggs, almonds, ginger, beets, beans, pumpkin, apples, cranberries, garlic, cauliflower, leeks, and lentils. Some are the same. Most are not. So I found a problem. Everyone has an opinion on what is a "super" food. This is just an example. I found lists and lists with some overlap but mostly different foods. I then turned to Science. Livescience author Christopher Wanjek in May of 2013 posted an article titled "What are superfoods?" He made some very valid points. Superfoods are rich in nutrients and antioxidants. The criticism of the title is two fold. First, the food may be healthy but the processing and added sugar are not.

To insure healthy food make sure it is as close to how God made it as possible. The second problem is that because it is on some list people will eat more of one fruit or vegetable than another. His example question is "Is broccoli really healthier than asparagus?" The answer from Livescience and Everyday health is the same. The best way to eat superfoods is to eat a diet with variety of plant based fruits, vegetables, whole grain, and healthy animal products. By eating a variety you ensure that you eat different nutrients, antioxidants, proteins, and vitamins. This has been my problem as I tend to find some "go to" recipes and meals and just reuse that idea several times throughout the week. My conclusion is that God has given us a variety of foods for a reason. No one food can do it all. It is up to us to eat natural real food and get the variety that God intended so we can be as healthy as possible. The lists are great tools but by eating a variety we can have the vital nutrients we need.

Lisa Huth - The Best Superfoods

I researched Super-foods (focusing on slimming super-foods), and will list out 10 that were cited in several different sources.

1) Oats- they are rich in fiber which helps you feel full and they contain 4.6 grams of resistant starch which is a healthy carb that boosts metabolism and burns fat.

2) Avocados- These were on every list I read. While avocados are high in fat, they are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) which can help slim belly fat. Avocados also contain fiber and protein, making it a well rounded addition to any meal.

3) Black beans - They contain 15 grams of protein per cup and no saturated fats (like many red meats) which make for a good addition to family meals in place of meat once in a while.

4) Salmon- A lean protein which can help weight loss as well as being good for your heart (being rich Omega-3). "A 2001 study found that dieters eating a MUFA-rich (see #2) diet lost an average of 9 lbs., while their low-fat diet counterparts gained, on average, 6 lbs." (Health.com)

- 5) Blueberries - They're best known for their anti-aging effects, but are also full of antioxidants, as well as containing 4 grams of fiber per cup.
- 6) Broccoli - It is very low in calories (30 calories per cup), and contains fiber making it filling and weight-loss friendly.
- 7) Grapefruit - at 90% water, this fruit is filling and contains compounds which lower insulin, a fat storage hormone.
- 8) Green tea - The antioxidants in green tea will help you burn fat and calories.
- 9) Eggs - Like avocados, eggs contain natural fats combined with protein making them a good for you food. And, although they have cholesterol in them, have not been proven to affect cholesterol levels (self.com).
- 10) Kale - One cup of chopped kale contains 1.3 grams of fiber and only 34 calories, as well as being high in iron and calcium.

The sources I used were health.com, self.com, and skinnymys.com

Alison Humphrey - The Best Superfoods

I have decided to do my research on 5 super foods that need to be included in your diet. I wanted you to see at least one food from each food group.

The first super good is KALE. Kale is pretty inexpensive so it is good for the budget. Also is it good for lung congestion and is very beneficial for your stomach, liver and immune system.

The second super food is RAW ALMONDS. Almonds are good for a healthy cholesterol level and promotes heart and vascular health.

The third super food is COCONUT OIL. Coconut oil promotes heart and immune system health. It also promotes weight loss by supporting a healthy metabolism.

The fourth super food is AVOCADOS. Avocados helps your body absorb fat. Plus it provides about 20 essential health boosting nutrients.

The last super food is CHIA. Chia is loaded with essential fatty acids.

I have noticed since I have been supplementing these super foods into my daily diet I have felt better, had more energy and have been successful with my weight loss goals.

Sources: www.mercola.com & www.greatist.com

Cindy Beeman - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

In my article I read about it talked about how artificial sweetener about how they harm our bodies and our planet. Although much was not said about on the planet part, the other was quite interesting. The planet part was basically how we waste so much of it. The other that I learned was that the chemicals or natural compounds that we use to replace the sugar are still loaded with calories. Also that aspartame is a chemical with many side affects. Hallucinations, seizures, and brain tumors, not something I really want to risk. Sucralose research has also dug up some things I would not want to subject my body to. Like enlargement of the liver and kidneys, and shrinking of the thymus glands. No thank you, I will stick with the healthy way of doing things. I posted the article earlier from where I received my info.

Jessica Garner - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

I researched "What's wrong with artificial sweeteners". I found the content in a lot of the articles I read were the same and most agreed that although there is benefit in the lower calories that artificial sweeteners offer and benefits for people with diabetes in regards to having a greater variety of food and beverage choices most articles agreed that they were probably not the best choice. Artificial sweeteners are anywhere from 30 to 8000 times sweeter than sugar! Regular consumption of artificial sweeteners can change the way we taste food and because of this you find less sweet foods such as fruit not as enjoyable. There is also a lot of research on the regular consumption of diet soda. One study showed that people who drink more than 21 diet drinks per week were twice as likely to become overweight or obese as people who did not drink diet soda! There is also greater risk for developing type II diabetes. Artificial sweeteners can promote hunger and increase your appetite. They also can stimulate high insulin levels in the blood which promote storage of body fat. I will definitely more

carefully check labels on products that I buy. Source: (fitday.com author SherryGranader) (harvard health blog, author Holly Strawbridge)

Angela McKinney - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

“What’s wrong with artificial sweeteners?” I chose this topic because I realized my serious addiction to diet cokes before entering this challenge. I had heard that aspartame and other artificial sweeteners have really bad side effects, but I needed to find out for myself. (Although somewhat begrudgingly:)

According to prohealth.com: Dr. Scott Olson said, “Almost every artificial sweetener has been a product of chemical experiments where the person doing the experiment accidentally tasted the chemical they were working on and noticed it was sweet.” Studies have shown:

1. Artificial sweeteners do not help with weight loss, but actually make cravings worse.
2. It does not help break the sugar addiction. Continually eating or drinking sweets (even artificial sweeteners) keeps the craving for sweets alive. The only way to break a sugar addiction is to avoid sugar.
3. It leads to overeating due to the body’s insulin response. Your body’s response to a sweet taste in your mouth releases insulin. When insulin is released, it pushes blood sugar levels lower which may be the reason you eat more—low blood sugar makes you feel hungry. (I always wondered why I craved sweets when drinking my diet cokes and why an ice cream cone seemed to taste so good with a diet coke—made NO sense.)
4. Artificial sweeteners are a by-product of chemical experiments. It is not a food.

According to nutralegacy.com, the top 10 dangers of artificial sweeteners include:

1. Cancer
2. Depression, bi-polar disorder, and panic attacks
3. Headaches

4. Weight gain
5. Allergic reactions
6. Birth defects and infertility
7. Blurred vision, hearing loss, memory loss
8. Cell damage
9. Dangerous to the nervous system

According to mercola.com, aspartame is a product of methanol which breaks down to formaldehyde. The two ingredients of aspartame are phenylalanine and aspartic acid. It sabotages weight control. It stimulates the release of insulin and leptin which instructs the body to STORE fat.

“Whether or not you’re an aspartame reactor, keep in mind aspartame is completely metabolized by the human body and its products can create a serious risk to your health.”

(Now I know the truth about my diet cokes. I guess I can’t say “Ignorance is bliss.”)

Paula Walters - What’s Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

"In studies of rats who were exposed to cocaine, then given a choice between intravenous cocaine or oral saccharine, most chose saccharin." (see source #1)
Wow! I can believe this. I was once addicted to diet soda. I started to drink it in my tween years (remember Tab?), and kept it up with a passion through high school, college and into my late thirties. Several years ago, around the age of 40, I decided to pretty much give it up (and all soda). I even eventually changed toothpastes to one that didn't contain an artificial sweetener (have you checked your toothpaste label lately?), and stayed away from gum and mints that contained artificial sweeteners (which is almost all of them). The reason? I broke out in hives and have had it chronically for several years now, and I really think that the connection may be all those years of artificial sugar consumption, mostly through diet soda, but also through sugar-free foods. The month before I first broke out in hives I consumed an inordinate amount of Ocean Spray diet

cranberry products...was there a connection? Since completely staying away from it for about a year, every now and then I will have a diet drink (like Sprite), but it is pretty rare. I now go for the flavored seltzer waters that are not sweet if I need a little carbonation.

In researching artificial sweeteners for the FIT Challenge this week, I have discovered an overwhelming amount of information on this topic. I'm going to keep this as simple as possible for easy reading, but feel free to check out some of the links that I will post in the comments section below. First of all, there are a dizzying array of names and artificial sweetener products. If you see these in your food labels, beware: sucralose, Splenda, acesulfame k (acesulfame potassium, Ace-K or Sunett), aspartame, Neotame, saccharin, Sweet N'Low, Equal, Nutrasweet, Advantame, Alitame, Aspartame-Acesulfame salt, Cyclamate, Neohesperidin DC. Whew! Just the sound of some of these recall flashbacks of high school chemistry labs...and with good reason. When you take sugar and chemically alter it, lots of strange things start to happen. It only goes to follow that strange things would start to happen to our bodies when we ingest it, especially every day.

Saccharin was the first artificial sweetener discovered, and I was surprised to learn that it was discovered in the Victorian era in 1879! I was even more surprised to find out that saccharin was in widespread use by WWI. Later after WWII, people started to suspect that perhaps saccharin could have harmful health effects. My husband reminded me that back in our college days after we were just married, we were invited to dinner at an older couples house who we knew from our church. I remembered the night, but not the specifics. During the course of conversation, this older gentleman began to tell us that he was a part of that original 1960 study of the carcinogenic effects of saccharin. (He maintained that saccharin was only dangerous if ingested in large, super-huge quantities.) There is a long and interesting history about saccharin and the FDA's stormy relationship over the years, and it doesn't end well for the average diet soda consumer.

In summary, there are many reported adverse effects to artificial sweeteners: dizziness, change of the taste palette, cramps, mood and memory changes, headaches, increased risks of cancer, and maybe even hives. These are the tip of the iceberg. Consider this quote from one of my sources (#2 below): "The theory is that upon consumption, the body reacts as if the artificial sweetener is glucose, and stimulates the release of insulin (shown in animal studies). This would cause the activation of the body's storage mode. Fats and sugars are more likely to be stored than burned. If the sweetener is consumed by itself as part of a low-calorie beverage, then the body is trying to store glucose that isn't there, so hunger for sugar is stimulated. That hunger triggers a stress response in the body that is most likely the cause of some heart palpitations, headaches, and muscle cramps. So, for a moment of simulated sweetness, the metabolism switches off, the body is put into storage mode and hunger for sugar is stimulated."

So does that mean that my body has been storing artificial sweetener chemicals for all these years (30+)? Especially since I am overweight now and have carried a lot of it during my post-wedding life? If I lose all of my excess weight (and still stay away from all artificial sweeteners), will the chronic hives disappear because the stored toxins are finally gone? Maybe saccharin is ok in small quantities according to studies, but if the body is tricked into storing it, or its broken down components, then it becomes a large amount over time...right? This is a theory that I have, and it will be interesting to see how this plays out as the pounds disappear.

Jessica Jones - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

When I started this 8 week Fit Challenge, I was concerned how I could overcome living without my diet Mt. Dew and my splenda and sugar free coffee creamer in my coffee. I thought I was doing ok since it was all calorie free. After having my hair cut recently, my beautician said she was diagnosed with aspartame poisoning. She had spent thousands of dollars prior to this doctor on test trying to find what was wrong with her. My eyes have been open to the dangers of artificial sweeteners. I had never heard of aspartame poisoning, so I googled it and have been studying it. My friend said her prior doctors never asked her what her diet consisted of, they just wanted to treat her symptoms. My husband is a pharmacist and he tells me so often that people just want prescriptions to treat

their symptoms, instead of finding the cause to their illness. After going to the doctor that diagnosed her with aspartame poisoning, the first question he asked her was what was she eating and drinking. He asked if she was drinking diet sodas and she had said yes and admitted to drinking 6 diet Mt. Dew's a day. He challenged her to cut it out entirely and drink nothing but water. She found that after a week, and severe withdrawal, her symptoms started to diminish. She knows without a doubt she had aspartame poisoning.

"Artificial Sweeteners Deadly Deception: Aspartame, Splenda, Sucralose...

The food and beverage industry is increasingly replacing sugar or corn syrup with artificial sweeteners in a range of products traditionally containing sugar. Sold commercially under names like NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful, Equal-Measure and Canderel, aspartame can be found in more than 6,000 products. "Aspartame (NutraSweet) appears to cause slow, silent damage in those unfortunate enough to not have immediate reactions and a reason to avoid it. It may take one year, five years, 10 years, or 40 years, but it seems to cause some reversible and some irreversible changes in health over long-term use." "Aspartame has a profound effect on mood and cognition....depressed mood, anxiety, dizziness, panic attacks, nausea, irritability, impairment of memory and concentration."

<http://www.shirleys-wellness-cafe.com/Consumption/NutraSweet.aspx>

Heather Strubinger - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

I chose to do artificial sweeteners as my research project. The last "diet" that I did was Weight Watchers. I managed to lose 60 pounds doing this diet....but after losing it....as soon as I started to eat again...I gained it all back very quickly! As I was doing weight watchers, I switched to lots of sugar free items and went from drinking sweet tea at meals to drinking diet pop....in order to save points for food. I had a gut feeling that I was not really making a healthier choice but it seemed to work and I went ahead with it. However, after doing my research...I can see many of the reasons that I gained my weight back. Even after I stopped "dieting" I continued with the diet pop. I learned that the artificial sweeteners have an overly sweet taste which leaves us wanting more sweet stuff. I can safely say that I did not gain my weight back eating food. When I went back to sugar...I ate ALOT of it. The majority of my weight was gained by eating sweets. I also learned that

artificial sweeteners can lead to type 2 diabetes by altering the bacteria in our guts. But that if you have been using them, and you stop, you can help to restore healthy bacteria by adding a probiotic or adding yogurt to your diet. I also learned that studies show sucralose (Splenda) can enlarge the liver and kidneys, and shrink the thymus gland. Aspartame can cause skin rashes, panic attacks, diarrhea, headaches, bladder issues, and stomach pain. I don't know what you all think, but these are some pretty serious reasons to stay as far away from artificial sweeteners as possible. Information came from the internet article in prevention magazine based upon an Israeli study.

Gail Gall - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

I did my research on artificial sweeteners, paying particular attention to aspartame, as I have had a 30 year Diet Dr. Pepper habit. And not just one per day! I drank it like water. This, by far, has been my toughest thing to give up. The first two weeks were easy, but these last three weeks I have missed it terribly. After reading a plethora of information on this subject, I am not missing it nearly as much.

Artificial sweeteners are synthetic sugar substitutes that seem attractive because they add almost no calories to your diet. Don't be fooled though, they do not help your "diet." They are intense sweeteners that are many times sweeter than regular sugar. Some dangers:

- When you take in high intensity sweeteners, you seek out sweeter and sweeter foods because your taste buds have been dulled by the artificial sweetener. Even fruit loses its sweetness over time.

- They trick your stomach into thinking you're more hungry. You end up overeating.

- They mess with your hormones because you are essentially pumping chemicals into your body.

- They come from genetically modified food sources.

- Cancer risk

The list goes on and on and yet if you look at the cancer.gov site it states, "no clear evidence that artificial sweeteners available in the U.S. are associated with cancer risk in humans."

I will choose to believe the rest of the evidence that I read speaking of the dangers associated with artificial sweeteners. God didn't put them on the earth, so I need to be very wise in using them at all.

Info from: rodalenews.com; mayoclinic.org;medicinenet.com; etc.!

Monique Wittmer - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

Dangerous Effects of Artificial Sweeteners on Your Health

So about 40 years ago, sugar substitute was deemed to have 'potentially helpful,' 'potentially harmful,' or have 'unclear effects' with regard to your health. People who frequently consume sugar substitutes (saccharin, aspartame, and sucralose) may be at an increased risk of excessive weight gain, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Consuming even one of these artificial sweeteners a day may increase your risk for several health problems significantly.

First, weight gain and obesity were significantly greater in those consuming the sweeteners, increased body mass index and an increased body fat percentage. Second, metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions; increased blood pressure, a high blood sugar level, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol levels. These combined can occur together, and increase your risk of stroke, heart disease, and other diseases. Third, the risk for developing type 2 diabetes more than doubles with daily consumption of the artificial sweeteners. Lastly, consuming at least one artificially-sweetened food daily significantly elevated risk for hypertension for women in a number of studies.

On a very personal note, I am always asking my parents to cut their intake on the Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi...after reading these articles and doing my research I am in tears. I knew what I wanted to do my search topic on...but I knew it would be very hard for me. <http://www.medicaldaily.com/4-dangerous-effects-artificial-...>

Katie Satterfield - What's Wrong With Artificial Sweeteners

Research on artificial sweeteners:

I have always used artificial sweeteners, first Equal, then Splenda, and most recently, Truvia. I started questioning Splenda a while back when we finally figured out that it was the trigger for my husband's constant migraines. When I joined FIT, we started using only coconut sugar or honey to sweeten our coffee and tea (no migraines in the last 5 weeks!).

Research on artificial sweeteners:
I have always used artificial sweeteners, first Equal, then Splenda, and most recently, Truvia. I started questioning Splenda a while back when we finally figured out that it was the trigger for my husband's constant migraines. When I joined FIT, we started using only coconut sugar or honey to sweeten our coffee and tea (no migraines in the last 5 weeks!). On my last cheat day I used a packet of Truvia in my coffee and could hardly drink it because it was soooo sweet!! After reading several articles I noticed a common fact: artificial sweeteners are 200-7,000 times sweeter than sugar!!! Something else I read also made loads of sense to me: using these sweeteners makes you crave even sweeter things, and naturally sweet foods such as fruit are not sweet enough after being exposed to the fake stuff! (So after my Splenda or Truvia, milk chocolate: here I come!) No more! I'm loving the coconut sugar!

Online sources: Rodale News, The Doctor Will See You Now, Harvard Health Publications
(no migraines in the last 5 weeks!). On my last cheat day I used a packet of Truvia in my coffee and could hardly drink it...

Marcy Davis - Hybrids are not GMO's

In researching GMO's I ran across some articles presenting the difference between Hybridization and genetically modified food.

A genetically modified organism can be any plant, animal or microorganism which has been genetically altered using molecular genetics, the actual altering of the organism at the genetic level. GMOs involve the combining of DNA molecules from disparate sources into a single molecule to form a new set of genes. The organism that receives this new DNA molecule gets modified, or new, genes, including ones that improve a plant's hardiness, imbue it with powerful endogenous pesticides and/or herbicides, or lengthen its shelf life.

Scientists are implanting pesticides right into our food. It makes the crop much easier to grow for the large corporations that are taking over farming. It results in much greater harvests. But at what cost? None of us want to knowingly feed our family pesticides!

With the other presentations, I won't expound on GMO's too much more except to say they are UNHEALTHY.

HYBRIDS, on the other hand, are HEALTHY as they are the result of cross-pollination between two species of plants.

*Peppermint is a naturally occurring hybrid. It is a cross between water mint and spearmint. If cross-pollination between those two species never happened, we would have no peppermint, a universally known flavor.

*Seedless fruits, such as watermelon and oranges, are the result of hybridization.

*Tangelos are the hybrid between a tangerine or mandarin orange and a grapefruit.

*Boysenberries are a hybrid of raspberries and blackberries.

*Broccolini is a hybrid of broccoli and kai-lan (also written as gai-lan) the Cantonese name for a leafy vegetable that is also known as Chinese Kale

The hybrid phenomenon is natural. Whether we create a hybrid by cross-pollinating two species or whether it naturally occurs, the process is perfectly normal, not harmful to our bodies.

Hybridization attempts are not a new procedure. In the late 19th century, a plant breeder, Luther Burbank, was the first person to successfully cross plums with apricots, creating the 50-50 hybrid "plumcots".

In the 20th century Floyd Zaiger bred the plumcot with a plum to create the pluot (75% plum/25% apricot).

These hybrids are results of intricate crossbreeding. They mechanically transfer pollen from flowers of one plant to the other attempting to maximize desired traits such as a tastier, heartier fruit or vegetable.

The process of hybridization in itself should not be a concern.

Hybrid fruits and vegetables are safe to consume.

(Of course evaluate any other source just as you do now for pesticides, and fertilizers and farming techniques etc).

“The Perfect Fruit”, a book about pluots, author Chip Brantley

holistichealthexpert.net/hybridsvsgmos

marksdailyapple.com/hybrid-fruits-vegetables/#ixzz3WOL5kBgx

wisegeek.com/what-is-watermint.htm

merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tangelo

Sonja Ward - What are GMOs?

GMO's ... A term I'd not heard before I became a part of FIT! It stands for Genetically Modified Organism. These are plant or meat products that have had their DNA artificially altered by genes from other plants, animals, viruses, or bacteria, in order to produce foreign compounds in that food. These genetic alterations are formed in a laboratory and not found in nature.

www.inlander.com

Although you'll see foods labeled "NON-GMO" it is NOT a requirement in the US to label foods that are GMO. There are various organizations lobbying to see this changed.

Too many of the foods we eat contain "things" not found in nature. Through research on my own and those I've read on our FIT site, I've made some changes in our home. I'm more careful about my ingredients and am making more things from scratch! We are a society of convenience and are slowly killing ourselves with the "altered" and "preserved" foods!

Fizzy Jones - What are GMOs?

GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism. This process takes a beneficial trait from one plant and adapts it to another by altering its DNA to change it. These changes allow plants to resist insects, fungus, viruses and herbicides, change nutritional content, and improve taste and storage. Some common examples are corn, potatoes and soybean that were modified to resist herbicides. More than 80% of all GMOs grown worldwide are engineered for herbicide tolerance. As a result toxic herbicides like Roundup have increased 15 times. Not surprising since GMO's are a direct extension of chemical agriculture and are developed and sold by the world's biggest chemical companies. Squash was modified for virus resistance and tomatoes were modified to delay ripening.

As I researched GMO's I found two opposing groups. One group is promoting the practice for what they say will feed the whole world one day and improve soil, productivity and quality of our foods. The opposing group fears the multitude of possible health risks, environmental damage, and violations of farmers' and consumers' rights.

Most nations do not consider GMOs safe. More than 60 countries around the world ban the production and sale of GMO products. In the US however the government has approved GMO production and use. Moreover companies that produce and sell these products are not required to label them so the consumer can make a choice to use them or not.

Here are some of the high-risk crops in commercial production today that are more than 90% GMO, Canola oil, Corn, Papaya, Soy, Sugar Beets, Zucchini and Yellow Summer Squash. GMOs are also in as much as 80% of our processed foods. Some common ingredients produced from these GMO crops that are in the foods that we eat and feed to our children every day are Aspartame, Ascorbic Acid, Vitamin C, Citric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Flavorings, High-Fructose Corn Syrup, Molasses, MSG, Sucrose, Xanthan Gum, Vitamins and Yeast Products.

Some crops that are not currently GMO: Broccoli, baby carrots, grape tomatoes, wheat, seedless watermelon and honey crisp apples.

There is no solid proof yet that GM foods cause cancer and other health problems. GMO's haven't been around long enough to know the long term effects. Like with led paint, that was considered safe when it was first produced, it

took time for its side effects to emerge. These are some of the health problems that are attributed to today's GM foods: memory loss, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and dementia, chronic degenerative disorders and the diseases of aging, allergies, antibiotic resistance and cancers. Nobody knows for sure if GMOs are a long-term threat to our health, so in my view we should take whatever precautions we can to avoid using GMOs until it is clear. While we wait for label laws to take effect, you should read your food labels carefully. If your food contains soy, corn, canola, or sugar — and it isn't organic — it is most likely made with GMO products.

To find non-GMO products, go to www.nongmoproject.org/find-n.../search-participating-products/

<https://gmoanswers.com/>

<http://www.thebetterhealthstore.com>

<http://www.who.int/.../food.../faq-genetically-modified-food/en/>

<http://www.healthline.com/health/gmos-pros-and-cons#3>

<http://discover.monsanto.com/sustainable-farming/>

Rachel Myers - ARE GMO'S REALLY BAD FOR YOU??

O.K. first thing first. I do NOT work for Monsanto. I do not gain anything by you NOT switching from regular fruits and vegetables versus going organic! There are some of you that have done research and I am not at all trying to discredit the choices that you make for your family! Everyone needs to make decisions for their own personal family. I am simply tired of misinformation scaring people into something they don't even understand. So this is to try to perhaps give a view that most don't hear. This is simply the research that I have found. No, I am not an "expert" by any means! Yes, my husband is a farmer! Yes, they use GMO seeds! **gasp!** I know! Seriously though, there are a couple of things that I hope people understand by the end of my research. (I did go back and edit as I had quite of bit of information but I figured if you had questions, feel free to ask me!)

- There is money to be made by SOMEONE! Both Monsanto and such companies and the organic farmer have money to gain from your business.

- Fear causes people to do things they would not do otherwise! In my research, a lot of those stating that GMO's are harmful or bad for us, simply use fear tactics and fail to point out how exactly GMO's are harmful.

What does GMO stand for? – Genetically modified organism. But what does that mean?? GMOs are plants whose cells have been inserted with a gene from an unrelated species in order to take on specific characteristics. For example, plants might be genetically engineered to develop a resistance against insects or to increase nutrients.

Money – There is always going to be money to be made by someone. Farming has been around for well...quite some time! I find it fascinating that as a society we are generally perfectly fine with having science and technology advances everywhere in our lives except food. Farmers are one of the few professions that are unable to “market” their product directly to a consumer. Due to this fact, they are dependent on what is known as a price taker model. So instead of being able to look at all of their costs and figure out how much they need to charge in order to make a profit, instead they are reliant on supply and demand. This is important to realize as this is the main reason why GMO seeds were developed in the first place.

Just like most every other profession I know, farmers have to find ways to be more efficient in their work! For those that do not know (I had NO idea, my husband has been farming for just 3 years now, his Dad was a farmer, so my husband has FAR more knowledge than I do..I'm still learning.) my husband typically works from 7am-6pm (there are no animals currently or I am sure he would be to work earlier) oh and this is during a non harvest or planting season. During those times it is not uncommon for him to work from 5am-11pm or even later if the crop needs to get out!! Because farmers are at the mercy of the weather! O.K. so I realize I am getting a little off track and I will try to get back on course, but I think it is important for people to realize how much work a farmer puts into getting a crop out of the ground. So WHY GMO's?

Genetically engineering crops helps the farmer in different ways depending on what particular modification has been made. There is a modification that enables a crop to not be affected by herbicide so they can kill weeds and not the crop.

There is a modification that enables a crop to kill certain bugs so they will not eat that crop. There is a modification that enables a crop to continue growing if drought is a problem in that area.

Now, I am going to talk about the science in my next section so hold on to your hats if you are worried about how these modifications might effect you, I will talk about it...

So back to MONEY...you see farmers use these seeds so that they do not have to spray more chemicals on a crop to kill bugs or so that they don't have to spend more time running a cultivator in the field.

I wish I could show you how large the average farm is, because I am a city girl, I grew up a military brat and had NO CLUE what a farmer did or what a farm looked like. I just envisioned someone growing vegetables in their backyard like a garden. However, time is money and if there is a way for a farmer to not have to spend more time in the field, or if they have more of a crop it means two things. One the farmer is profitable and can continue to farm. Two you don't have to pay ridiculous prices for fruits and vegetables.

O.K. there is a lot more I could write about when it comes to money from GMO labeling to the fact that MONSANTO is not the only GMO seed company. :0 (Wait what?!?! I know hard to believe) However, there is an AWESOME place that you can read about this information and more at <https://petersonfarmblog.wordpress.com/.../greg-peterson-adv.../> (A farmer that wrote this! He gets no money from any seed company by writing this blog...it is actually a group of brothers and they are very funny and have made some pretty funny farm parody songs about farming on YouTube!)

SO ONTO my next section

Fear – If you type in GMO into any search engine you will most likely come across blogs, articles, and the such that say the following...

“There is no credible evidence that GMO foods are safe to eat.”

– David Schubert, Salk Institute of Biological Studies

“Genetically modified (GM) foods should be a concern for those who suffer from food allergies because they are not tested....”

– Organic Consumers Association

However, these claims are not at all proven by science in fact quite the opposite. One of the articles that I will take quotes from is a group of ITALIAN scientists that wanted to gather all of the research that has been compiled and see what it says.

“...In response to what they believed was an information gap, a team of Italian scientists cataloged and analyzed 1783 studies about the safety and environmental impacts of GMO foods—a staggering number.

The researchers couldn’t find a single credible example demonstrating that GM foods pose any harm to humans or animals. “The scientific research conducted so far has not detected any significant hazards directly connected with the use of genetically engineered crops,” the scientists concluded.

The research review, published in Critical Reviews in Biotechnology in September, spanned only the last decade—from 2002 to 2012—which represents only about a third of the lifetime of GM technology.

In short, genetically modified foods are among the most extensively studied scientific subjects in history. This year celebrates the 30th anniversary of GM technology, and the paper’s conclusion is unequivocal: there is no credible evidence that GMOs pose any unique threat to the environment or the public’s health. The reason for the public’s distrust of GMOs lies in psychology, politics and false debates.”

It is fascinating to me how people can fear something that has no science behind it. However, I also find it fascinating that there are a LOT of smart people that believe in evolution so....

I do want to say one more thing in closing. I hope that my research has allowed you to see the other side. I rarely buy something that is organic. Why? Because I am not afraid of GMO’s and I am also not afraid of any pesticides that might have been sprayed on my vegetables or fruit. I have a secret weapon I use to wash mine. So for me, it is not worth paying more for something when I don’t have to. I

realize there may be some people that do not agree with me and that is o.k. To those of you that made it to the end of this...THANKS! You could have stopped reading a long time ago! I think you're awesome!!

A few of the resources I consulted:

<http://www.genuity.com/Pages/Home.aspx>

<http://www.monsanto.com/pages/default.aspx>

<https://petersonfarmblog.wordpress.com/.../greg-peterson-adv.../>

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

<http://naturalsociety.com/top-10-worst-gmo-foods-list/>

<http://www.nongmoproject.org/>

<http://reason.com/.../2.../04/04/the-gmo-labeling-saga-continues>

<http://geneticliteracyproject.org/.../with-2000-global-studi.../>

Melissa Pilgreen - What are GMOs?

GMOs (or “genetically modified organisms”) are living organisms whose genetic material has been artificially manipulated in a laboratory through genetic engineering, or GE. This relatively new science creates unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and viral genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods.

Virtually all commercial GMOs are engineered to withstand direct application of herbicide and/or to produce an insecticide. Despite biotech industry promises, none of the GMO traits currently on the market offer increased yield, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or any other consumer benefit. Meanwhile, a growing body of evidence connects GMOs with health problems, environmental damage and violation of farmers’ and consumers’ rights.

Are GMOs safe?

Most developed nations do not consider GMOs to be safe. In more than 60 countries around the world, including Australia, Japan, and all of the countries in

the European Union, there are significant restrictions or outright bans on the production and sale of GMOs. In the U.S., the government has approved GMOs based on studies conducted by the same corporations that created them and profit from their sale. Increasingly, Americans are taking matters into their own hands and choosing to opt out of the GMO experiment.

Are GMOs labeled?

Unfortunately, even though polls consistently show that a significant majority of Americans want to know if the food they're purchasing contains GMOs, the powerful biotech lobby has succeeded in keeping this information from the public. In the absence of mandatory labeling, the Non-GMO Project was created to give consumers the informed choice they deserve.

I find it repulsing how many chemicals and preservatives are foods are packed with and we wonder why as a society it's hard to lose weight and or eat healthy. I know that I am not always perfect with what I eat but after doing this research I am really going to try and buy more organic and pure food than all that other junk.

Here is a website to help find less GMO foods.

<http://www.nongmoproject.org/.../search-participating-produce.../>

Terri Batt - What are GMOs?

What are GMO's? According to Monsanto, the devil incarnate to most health-conscious people, GMO's are Genetically Modified (altered) Organisms. There are 8 GMO crops available for large farms to grow: Corn, Soybeans, Cotton, Alfalfa, Sugar beets, Canola, Papaya, Squash. The seeds of these particular food sources are genetically modified/changed to be more resistant to disease and pests, be more adaptable to water issues and the lack thereof, and to breed miniature varieties of food so there will be less waste after a meal.

For those who are concerned about the safety of GMO's, supposedly they have been tested for viability, adaptability, and sustainability. When looking at the world market overview, most developed nations do not consider GMO's to be

safe, except the USA. These have been approved by the same corporations that create them and profit from their sale, Monsanto being the largest one.

The above 8 listed crops are considered to be 'high-risk' in the Non-GMO movement. The common ingredients derived from these plants are: Amino Acids, Aspartame, Ascorbic Acid, Sodium Ascorbate, Vitamin C, Citric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Ethanol, Flavorings ("natural" and "artificial"), High-Fructose Corn Syrup, Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein, Lactic Acid, Maltodextrins, Molasses, Monosodium Glutamate, Sucrose, Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP), Xanthan Gum, Vitamins, Yeast Products. Taking a closer look, these ingredients are found in almost everything we eat if we buy processed foods, eat out, or buy baked goods.

Being a farmer's wife, I have been vocal in the use of limited GMO seed used on the farm. Sadly, it is very difficult to find non-GMO seed in large quantities to grow our own crops at a reasonable price. Personally, I will try growing my own food in an organic garden with non-GMO seed. There are numerous seed companies that promote non-GMO seeds for small gardens. No room for a garden in your back yard? Container gardening or find a friend that has a bit more room and work together. Support your local farmers and encourage those at the farmers markets to stay organic. Protect the honeybees from chemicals used around your home. The bees need protection. Buy locally, learn to can or freeze your food. Get back to your roots . . . enjoy what God has provided for us!

Sources: [http://discover.monsanto.com/sustainable-farming/...](http://discover.monsanto.com/sustainable-farming/)
<http://www.nongmoproject.org/learn-more/>

Tonya Gunn - What are GMOs?

My research for this week is on GMO's. (Genetically Modified Organisms) This is any organism that has genetic material altered by genetic engineering. While reading through this info I have found these to be very harmful to our foods. Studies done on animals have shown organ damage, gastrointestinal and immune disorders. They can cause accelerated aging and also infertility. The foods planted are sprayed with herbicides. They have built up a tolerance to them. So they in turn spray them even more. Our government does not require any safety assessments on these foods. Most countries do monitor GMO's. However ours does not. Makes me really think about the foods we are eating. The damage that

these foods can cause will show up later on in life. But may be too late to do anything at that point. We are seeing more & more cancer every single day. I can only try to do better for my family now. Hope you will too.

Kim Fischer - What are GMOs?

GMO's...GMOs (or “genetically modified organisms”) are living organisms whose genetic material has been artificially manipulated in a laboratory through genetic engineering, or GE. This relatively new science creates unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacteria and viral genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods.

Most developed nations do not consider GMOs to be safe. In more than 60 countries around the world, including Australia, Japan, and all of the countries in the European Union, there are significant restrictions or outright bans on the production and sale of GMOs. In the U.S., the government has approved GMOs based on studies conducted by the same corporations that created them and profit from their sale. Increasingly, Americans are taking matters into their own hands and choosing to opt out of the GMO experiment.

Since their introduction, GMOs have been given special inroads into the food supply -- not based on legitimate science or necessity, but because powerful private interests successfully manipulated the regulatory process, first in weak-willed nations like the U.S., and now (potentially) in more cohesive places like Europe. Recognizing that GMOs have never been proven safe or even necessary (except to line the pockets of biotech moguls), Europe has largely remained a bulwark in defending the integrity of its food supply against GMO poison.

I believe there is a movement to make us sick so we have to buy prescriptions, have chemotherapy, health issues as diabetes, overweight, headaches, overall feeling sickly...GMO contributes to this and the powers that be all work together in the demise of eating properly and healthy!

**Natural News

**The Non GMO Group

**Kim Fischer comment at the end.

Tammy Goodman - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

Sauteed Basil & Garlic Vegetables

1 lb veggies (red onions, zucchini, asparagus, bell peppers) coarsely chopped

2T butter

¼ cup fresh basil, chopped (optional)

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

½ lb green beans, trimmed

Heat butter in 12 inch nonstick skillet over medium heat and cook vegetables stirring occasionally, until tender-crisp. Combine basil with garlic in small bowl, then evenly sprinkle over vegetables. Cook 1 minute.

Baked Parmesan squash

2 zucchini (medium)

2 yellow squash (medium)

1 T olive oil

¼ tsp pepper

½ tsp garlic salt

1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 450 degrees .

Cut squash in slices and toss with olive oil. Place on a cookie sheet in a single layer. *You may need two sheet pans.*

Sprinkle squash with pepper, garlic salt and parmesan cheese.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, until lightly browned on top.

Vegetable Paella

Traditional vegetable paella can be prepared with a wide array of vegetables. You can substitute your favorite in-season veggies for the ones in this recipe. Many people enjoy peas in their paella.

1 onion, finely chopped

3 cups water or low-sodium vegetable

broth

1 red bell pepper, diced or sliced thinly

(1¼ cups)

2 cups tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and

puréed

4-5 sun-dried tomatoes, soaked in hot

water until tender and then puréed

4 cloves garlic, pressed

1¾ cups medium-grain rice

1 teaspoon saffron

Pinch of paprika

1 vegetable bouillon (optional)

1½ cups frozen artichoke hearts,

thawed

1½ cups diced fresh green beans,

blanched

Instructions:

1. In a large saucepan, sauté the onion in ¼ cup vegetable broth for about 7 minutes or until translucent. Add the bell pepper and sauté for 7 minutes more or until soft.
2. Add the tomatoes, the sun-dried tomatoes, and the garlic, and sauté until most of the liquid is gone.
3. Add the rice, the saffron, and the paprika, and coat the rice. Add 3 cups of boiling vegetable broth or 3 cups of water with the vegetable bouillon. Stir. Add the artichokes and the green beans. Stir and bring to a boil.
4. Once the mixture is boiling, count exactly 20 minutes, then turn off the heat and let the pan be. Do not stir; just shake the pan to help even out the contents, then cover with a clean dish towel and let set for 5-8 minutes.

Allyson Stanley - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

Vegetable Tian

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Coat a baking dish with olive oil cooking spray. Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Once hot, add 1 large chopped onion and saute until translucent, about 8 minutes. Add 2 cloves of minced garlic and cook for another 60 seconds. Spread the onion mixture on the bottom of the greased baking dish. Slice 2 potatoes, 1 zucchini, 1 squash and 3 Roma tomatoes in 1/4 inch thick slices. Layer them alternately in the dish on top of the onions, fitting them tightly into a spiral, making only one layer. Season with sea salt, black pepper and dried thyme, to taste. Drizzle the last tablespoon of olive oil over the top. Cover the dish with tin foil and bake for 35 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Uncover and sprinkle the Parmesan cheese on top and bake for another 25-30 minutes or until browned.

<http://www.fortheloveofcooking.net/20.../.../vegetable-tian.html>

Chopped Green Salad

On a large cutting board, cut 4 cups of spinach/lettuce and 1 small cucumber seeded into bite-size pieces. Add to a large salad bowl. Add 3 oz of broccoli blanched and shocked*, 3 oz of green beans blanched and shocked, 3/5 cup frozen edamame thawed, and 1 ½ cup of green grapes halved. Toss gently to mix.

Drizzle about 1/3 recipe Fresh Herb Dressing over vegetables. Toss gently to coat mixture with dressing.

Fresh Herb Dressing

In a screw-top jar combine 1 cup fresh squeezed orange juice, 1/3 olive oil, 1 TBLS cider vinegar, 2 TBLS of snipped fresh Italian parsley, basil or thyme, 2 TSP mustard, and pepper. Cover and shake well. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate up to 3 days. Stir or shake well before using.

<http://www.bhg.com/recipe/salads/chopped-green-salad/>

Baked Zucchini Sticks

Cut 3 medium-size zucchini, about 9" to 10" long into 3" sticks about the diameter of your finger. Place the zucchini sticks in a colander over a bowl, and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of salt. Let them drain for 1 hour or longer. Rinse zucchini thoroughly; you want to get rid of any excess salt. Then pat them dry.

Next up: the bread and cheese coating. But first, preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment, and spray the parchment with olive oil. Combine the following:

1 cup Panko bread crumbs

scant 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon Pizza Seasoning or mixed Italian herbs

Mix until thoroughly combined. Beat 2 large eggs; or pour 1/2 cup egg substitute into a dish. You're going to dip each zucchini stick in the egg then roll it in the crumbs. Place the sticks on the prepared baking sheet. Bake the sticks for about 12 minutes, until they're starting to brown. Remove from the oven, and turn them over; you may actually need to do this one by one, or you may be able to turn several at a time using a spatula. Bake for an additional 12 to 16 minutes or so, until golden brown and crisp.

<http://www.kingarthurflour.com/.../baked-zucchini-sticks-and.../>

Greek Dip

On a large platter drizzle 1/3 cup of olive oil until you have a thin layer on the entire platter. You may use more or less here depending on your preference. Add 3 Roma tomatoes seeded and diced, 4-5 green onions sliced thinly, and 8 oz of feta on top of the olive oil. Sprinkle with the Greek seasoning to taste. With a spoon carefully combine the ingredients. We found that we like a little drizzle of balsamic vinegar on top. If desired, drizzle a little balsamic vinegar on top.

<http://www.the-girl-who-ate-everything.com/.../easy-feta-dip....>

Erica Gardner - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

I decided to research Ideas for Savory Vegetables. I love cooking and trying new recipes and since joining FIT I am always looking for new and yummy ways to get me veggies in.

1. Roast them. This is by far my favorite way to eat pretty much any vegetable. Just drizzle with some olive or coconut oil, sprinkle with some salt and any other seasoning you enjoy, and then roast away!!

<http://www.tablefortwoblog.com/roasted-vegetables/>

2. Saute or stir fry them. Gives a similar flavor as roasting them, but its a little quicker and the veggies end up a little crunchier. I like sautéing them with some fresh garlic.

<http://www.kayotic.nl/blog/caramelized-carrots-2>

3. Put them in a quiche, frittata or a tart. This is a great way to use up veggies and it makes a great meal. There are not to many veggies that don't taste great this way.

<http://sallysbakingaddiction.com/.../110-calorie-crustless-v.../>

4. Make Vegetable pancakes. I haven't tried this yet, but I will be soon. Looks yummy!!

<http://www.averiecooks.com/.../baked-chipotle-sweet-potato-an...>

<http://glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.com/.../savory-vegetable-pa...>

5. Make a vegetable soup. Throw in as many veggies as you can or just stick with a few, either way it will be healthy and delicious.

<http://www.grit.com/.../savory-vegetable-stew-recipe-zmaz06nd...>

6. How about Veggie Crepes? Another one I haven't tried, but looks delish.

[http://thealmondeater.com/2014/06/savory-vegetable-crepes/...](http://thealmondeater.com/2014/06/savory-vegetable-crepes/)

7. Make a casserole with them, just make sure none of those cream of crud soups are in there!! smile emoticon

<http://everydaydishes.com/simple-food.../brown-rice-casserole/>

Hope this helps get everyone's creative juices flowing!!

Sources: Pinterest

Tammy Lee - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

I am talking the Veggie Talk. Savory veggies. As mentioned going the roasted route with some garlic, seasoning and nummy toppings like parm cheese is "Top Chef" stuff. I admit I really like to do soups with the veggies and be creative. Go Asian, mexican, southern etc to some new twists. But a couple nice options are the salads that aren't just lettuce on a plate. I really like to take some shredded cabbage, add drained and washed kidney beans and red onion and top with oil & vinegar dressing. (snappy dressing of seasoned rice vinegar, with dill, salt and pepper and sweetened by preference). I also like to make a 3 bean salad with every bean I can find! Cukes, basil and motz balls are a rockin salad. I love to have cukes and onions in a large jar soaking in the snappy dressings and water. Better than chips! I can't have much fruit anymore, but I do like fruit in my salad too. It's perfect on summer nights! Be adventurous and make stuffed peppers from the recipe file or something like that! I cooked a bunch of veggies and put them in a portabella mushroom and baked it with some cheese on it! Delish. and of course use veggie alternatives like recommended like the cauliflower rice or pizza crust. If you can find fun dips for your raw veggies it's a nice change up.

Alicia Rollinger - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

Ok, I researched savory vegetable dishes and tried to find something that I would have never thought of making. I will be trying this! Courtesy of food.com

Savory Organic Golden Beets with Greens

Time: 38 minutes Serves:4 3/4 cup

1 garlic 2 cups of water

One bunch of beets with the tops (red or yellow, 3 medium beets)... Ok, I researched savory vegetable dishes and tried to find something that I would have never thought of making. I will be trying this! Courtesy of food.com

Savory Organic Golden Beets with Greens

Time: 38 minutes Serves:4 3/4 cup

1 garlic 2 cups of water

One bunch of beets with the tops (red or yellow, 3 medium beets)

1/2 tsp salt

1/2 lemon or lime.

Clean and dice beets

Clean green tops

Crush and chop garlic

Add the beets, garlic, salt into a HOT fry pan. There is no need for oil because you are trying to braise the beets to keep the flavor.

Turn the heat down to medium, once the beets start to brown add the water until the Beet's are soft and can push a fork into them-about 20 minutes. The water will evaporate down, chop and add the greens and squeeze the lemon or lime into the dish, cover and cook on medium until wilted. Serve right away!

Becky Post - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

I am doing the challenge on savory vegetable dishes. My favorite way to make veggies is to roast them. A few years back we started getting a local box of organic veggies & fruit. There were some "strange" things in there at first & we had no idea what to do with them. I either asked people I worked with or looked up

recipes online. You can roast almost all veggies. Cut up various veggies, put a little oil over them, season and bake at 400 for 15-20 min depending what type of veggies. Root veggies take longer.

Some of my favorite combos are Brussel sprouts with apple or sweet potatoes, zucchini, onion, peppers and kale.

Roasted veggies are great the next day heated up. They go great with chicken. Something quick, easy and yummy to take to work.

Kelly Radank - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

Zucchini Butter

2 pounds zucchini, more or less*

1/4 cup olive oil or butter, if you prefer

2 minced shallots, garlic, or combination of both

Salt and pepper

Coarsely grate the zucchini. Let it drain in a colander for 3 to 4 minutes or until you are ready to begin cooking. To hasten cooking time, squeeze the water out of the zucchini by wringing it in a clean cloth towel.

In a deep skillet, heat the olive oil/butter. Sauté the shallots briefly. Add the zucchini and toss. Cook and stir over medium to medium-high heat until the zucchini reaches a spreadable consistency. If you scorch the bottom, turn the flame down! (And scrape those delicious bits into the marmalade for added flavor.) The zucchini will hold its bright green color and slowly caramelize into a nice vegetable jam.

Enjoy on toast, or as a side dish all summer long!

Carrot Salad

Ingredients

- 1 pound carrots, peeled
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, from one lemon
- 1-1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1-1/2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1-2 teaspoons honey, to taste
- Heaping 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 finely sliced scallions (or 1 tablespoon finely chopped shallots)

Instructions

1. Grate the carrots in a food processor. Set aside.
2. In a salad bowl, combine the dijon mustard, lemon juice, honey, vegetable oil, olive oil, salt and pepper. Add the carrots, fresh parsley and scallions (or shallots) and toss well. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Savory Veggie Muffins

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups self-rising flour

2 cups grated cheese

1 cup of diced cooked bacon

1 cup of your chosen veggies either blitzed in the food processor or grated/finely diced (peeled zucchini is the safest option for super fussy tastebuds...here I used zucchini & carrot)

1/4 cup of finely chopped chives (leave out if your toddler has an aversion to green)

3/4 cup of milk

1 egg

Instructions

1. Pre-heat oven to 200°C (400°F).
2. In a large bowl stir together flour, cheese, bacon, vegies and chives.
3. Mix the milk and egg together.
4. Pour milk mixture into the flour mixture.
5. Stir until just mixed (it should have a thick, lumpy consistency).
6. Grease a 12-cup muffin tray and scoop batter in evenly.
7. Bake in oven for approximately 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Cheesy Spinach Muffins:

3 1/2 oz or 100g frozen spinach

2 2/3 oz or 75g feta

3 1/2 oz or 100g extra sharp cheddar

2 tomatoes

2 cups or 250g flour

Sea salt flakes

2 teaspoons baking powder

2 eggs

1/4 cup or 60ml olive oil

1 cup or 240ml milk

Several sprigs fresh thyme

Black pepper

Preheat your oven to 350°F or 180°C and grease your muffin pan liberally with non-stick spray or butter.

Thaw your spinach with a few zaps in the microwave. Or allow to thaw naturally, if you have time. I never seem to. Allow to cool, if you zapped it too long.

Kristin Burkholder - Ideas for Savory Vegetable Dishes

For many, cooking is performed out of necessity, but for others it can be an art form or a science experiment. There are so many flavors to explore and combinations to discover. So why do many (Americans) settle for bland food, especially when it comes to our vegetables?

I grew up in a primarily 'no spice' home and in high school when I started to cook more family meals, I was 'scolded' for adding too many flavors. I've always enjoyed creating recipes from items on hand and adding seasonings as I go. My husband, grew up similar to myself and never had culinary adventures until he met me. Thankfully, he enjoys my cooking and most dishes I make I will tell him to enjoy it because it will never be able to be recreated.

I've had the opportunity to travel to other countries such as Italy, Romania, Ireland, Mexico, France, Morocco and see how other cultures handle their meals, especially their vegetables; succulent artichokes with basil and parmesan in Rome; melt-in-your-mouth steamed potatoes and carrots with cumin in Morocco; creamy pumpkin soup with fresh herbs in Versailles, France. Ah, is your mouth watering yet?! Did you catch the common thread through most of those dishes? Herbs, spices, etc. And the fresher you can get the better!

Ideally, growing your own herbs would be splendid. But if you're like me and live in an apartment with zero outdoor space or you just don't have a green thumb there are alternative ways to take your vegetables to the next level. There are

fresh herbs in the produce section at grocery stores, usually ones like parsley, cilantro, dill and basil can be purchased in larger quantities. Basil and mint can often be found in plant form and placed in water and will live on your kitchen counter for a few days. Other fresh herbs like rosemary, thyme, and mint will be in plastic containers. Every store is different and this is only from my experience at my local grocery store. So if you don't find what you're looking for check out a different store that has more variety, like a Wegman's. Often, when I purchase the larger quantity bunch I will chop whatever I don't need for my recipe and freeze in a container.

Most likely, your pantry will be your primary source for herbs and spices. Some spices can be quite expensive so consider buying in bulk and sharing with a friend! However, usually the pricier ones won't be used as often in every day cooking. If you need ideas for which spices are a must have in your pantry a simple internet search of 'spices every kitchen should have' will give you some great ideas! Below are some of the most common spices that I use and some ideas for how I like to use them!

Cinnamon- I love to use cinnamon in a savory way! One of our favorite ways is to boil baby carrots until soft in water and cinnamon (sometimes with cumin too!). I will also add it to soup- especially soups like pumpkin or squash. I like to pair cinnamon with cumin and cayenne pepper to kick things up a bit!

Cumin- I learned a lot about cumin from my time in Morocco. The coolest thing I learned was that it can help regulate the digestive system- especially helpful since everyone on our team came down with a stomach bug! Moroccans will actually mix it in with warm water and drink. Though it is a little easier to eat when added to rice. I think cumin is one of the spices I use the most. I add it to soups, steamed carrots, and sweet potatoes.

Garlic- This one is a necessity! It is 100x better fresh, but for sake of time and convenience I do use it already minced in bulk. I cook a lot of 'one pot meals' that revolve around whatever vegetables I have and a starch. I always start off with sautéing garlic in olive oil before adding veggies (usually onions, peppers and mushrooms).

Cayenne Pepper- Disclaimer: A little goes a long way! No need to overdo it with this one, just a lil' dash here and there will be enough to add a new dimension to your vegetable dishes!

Dill- This herb has a fresh taste and I enjoy it in my veggie omelets! I have also added this to steamed carrots with good results.

Start exploring spices by trying a new recipe and seeing what you like from there. The more you cook with different spices and herbs you'll grow more confident to whip up your own quick savory side dishes. Basically, fake it till you make it!

Here are 3 of my favorite recipes from my 'Recipe Box' in allrecipes.com

Try Bok Choy! <http://allrecipes.com/.../baby-bok-choy-with-garl.../detail.aspx>

Cucumber, Tomato & Mint salad = amazing <http://allrecipes.com/.../tomato-cucumber-and-red.../detail.aspx>

Vegetarian stuffed peppers <http://allrecipes.com/re.../stuffed-peppers-my-way/detail.aspx>

I'll also share my newly perfected seasoning for sweet potato fries that incorporates some of my favorite spices. I make it in larger quantities and keep on hand since sweet potato fries are a staple in our house!

Kristin's Sweet Potato Fry Seasoning

½ tsp Cumin

¼ tsp Cinnamon

¼ tsp Paprika

1 tsp Garlic powder

1/8 tsp Salt

1/8 tsp Pepper

1/8 tsp Cayenne Pepper

2 Tblsp Brown Sugar (ahem, substitute maple syrup for points) optional

Have fun trying new ways to prepare vegetables and be brave to experiment with your own combinations! Enjoy!

Taryn Kobernat - Cross Training

Cross training is utilizing different forms of workout routines, and alternating them to maximize your personal fitness routines. Cross training helps speed up

weight loss because it combines different exercises, which allows your body to work out safely for longer periods of time. Your body can handle these different workouts because you are workout different muscle groups. Working out different muscle groups also reduces the risk of injury (injuries can often be a main cause for people quitting on workout routine.) Cross training also keeps boredom at bay! An effective session combines aerobic, strength and flexibility exercises. So, shake up those exercises before you find yourself "stuck in a rut" and un-energetic.

Source: [http://www.livestrong.com/.../394708-best-cross-training-wo.../...](http://www.livestrong.com/.../394708-best-cross-training-wo.../)

Renee Wilson - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

Ref. Weightloss.com

You do not need to be an athlete to cross train. It is a great method for someone who is simply looking to lose weight. In fact it is incredibly helpful. Cross training is mixing different activities into your workout routine. To state the obvious, doing that would help keep our workouts from becoming boring and many of us need diversity to stay motivated. The mix of cardiovascular, weight training, and flexibility/stretching will help to prevent overuse injuries. With cross training because you work different parts of your body it can help limit injury. Diversity in exercise will help you to become a stronger performer in all the categories of exercise. Subsequently you can gradually intensify your workouts and endurance for a better overall workout and all around health benefits.

Sherrice Jones - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

Cross training is mixing different activities into your regular workout routines. There are many benefits to cross training:

1. It enhances weight loss. By engaging in exercises that use several different modes of training for long durations (45min-1hr) helps you lose weight and body fat.

2. It improves your overall fitness. By mixing cardio, weight training and flexibility/stretching exercises it helps to improve overall bodily function, prevent injuries and greatly enhances endurance.

3. It also helps you stick to an exercise routine by relieving boredom.

I have started to implement this more in the last week. I have found I enjoy it more than just walking alone. Hoping it will show on the scale tomorrow.

So how can you cross train? You can change up your activities daily (run one day, cycle the next, aerobics the next) or walk on treadmill 15 minutes, lift weights 15 minutes and yoga or stretching 15 minutes. Whatever you choose...enjoy it and get FIT!

- Jessica Matthews, MS, E-RYT cardio, weight training and flexibility/stretching exercises it helps to improve overall bodily function...

Laurie Lundquist Winter - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

My approach to exercise will change after doing this research.

I tend to be one of those people that find an exercise routine that I am comfortable with and stick with it. But my research has shown that once you are comfortable you expend less energy in accomplishing that workout, possibly by as much as 25%. In weeks 6-8 is where you will plateau in your exercise program if you are not cross training.

First and foremost, cross training helps you achieve "functional fitness" for day to day life and makes it much less likely that you will injure yourself while doing day to day tasks.

The basics of cross training are to strengthen different muscle groups, allow muscle groups time to rest, reduces boredom and helps you develop new skills and improves your form. Cross training will also help reduce your risk of reaching a plateau. It's about enhancing your overall personal fitness.

If you are less likely to get bored, and less likely to get injured, then you are more likely to stick with a daily exercise plan!

Basic Cross Training includes: cardio, strength training and flexibility conditioning.

Advanced Cross Training adds: speed, agility and balance.

Athletes Cross Training adds: circuit training, skill conditioning and plyometrics.

But the truth is that as long as you incorporate a variety of exercises then you are cross training! Just try to break it into the following: strength one day, cardio the next, and then flexibility and balance. It's not about which specific exercises you do, it's about utilizing different muscle groups on different days to give the muscles time to rest and reduce the chance of injury.

References: healthline.com, WebMD.com, Livestrong.com, streetdirectory.com much as 25%. In weeks 6-8 is where you will plateau in your exercise program if you are not cross training.

Brittany Moore - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

Cross training is any exercise different than what you normally do. There are many benefits to cross training. It conditions you by asking more of your body. It helps you lose fat, gain muscle, and increases your cardio capability all in a single workout. Injuries often come from over doing a single activity, so cross training gives overused body parts a rest. It also helps you recover faster from hard workouts. Cross training can also help you improve at your usual workout such as running by working the muscles you use in a different way. Weight loss by cross training can be achieved by exercising for more than thirty minutes at a 60-85% level of intensity. It can reduce your body weight by combining two or more activities during cross training. My sister is a certified personal trainer and an avid runner and she recommends cross training. She said swimming, spinning and using the elliptical are all great cross training workouts that are easy on your joints, but burn tons of calories. So, change those workouts up and enjoy yourself!

Sources: runnersworld.com, acefitness.com, Brooke Wells- personal trainer

McKensie Martin - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

Though routine can bring a sense of order to life, it can be counterproductive when working out - following the same exercise regimen over and over not only gets boring, but can lead to exercise plateaus that can decrease your results. In fact, research shows that by sticking to just one activity, the number of calories burned by exercisers may decrease as much as 25 percent. Cross training simply

means mixing together a variety of exercise activities into a varied regimen. If you mix it up, you are surprising your body, which responds by burning more calories in an effort to 'adjust' to the new exercise.

If you consistently ride an exercise bike, try a stair climber, go to a kickboxing class, or go for a swim. Obviously, you will have many more options at a health club, but you can switch it up at home too. Some days I will ride my bike while toting my five year old and 1 year old. The next day, I will do a core workout video. The next day, I will do a video that focuses mostly on cardio but features a 20 min strength portion too. There are videos that focus on all different muscle groups as well. I have gotten all of my videos from the local library. You can only keep them for 7-14 days, so that forces you to keep changing it up smile emoticon. You could find a local racquetball court or tennis court. Even running as your consistent exercise has its limitations. The point here is to vary activities between aerobic conditioning, strength training, endurance, and balance -- and you need to vary the workouts that emphasize each one of those areas.

Clinical studies show most people plateau in their exercise programs somewhere between their sixth and eighth week. Exercisers should make sure they change their routines at least that often to maintain workout efficiency and prevent boredom. Ideally, having at least two different activities should be alternated daily or conducted within the same workout.

Sources:

http://www.streetdirectory.com/.../cross_training___the_key_t...

<http://www.webmd.com/.../get-stronger-and-leaner-with-cross-t...>

Amy Waycaster - Cross Training for Optimal Weight Loss

I researched optimal exercises for weight loss. I admit, I fully thought I would find a secret combination of exercises that would quickly take these extra pounds off. However, while every article I read agreed that intervals of some sort (fast pace then slower pace) and doing at five hours a week of exercise will help to achieve a faster result in weightloss. The thing that really stood out to me was this statement made by Timothy Church, MD, MPH, PhD, a professor at Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge, La. He said The best exercise to lose weight is: "the exercise you'll do." This is so true! Exercise is no good unless you do it!! In these articles they stated the two top reasons for not exercising was boredom and injury. It's important to switch up the exercises so you don't become bored and so your body doesn't adjust to the exercise and your weight

plateaus. How true and encouraging this is. I may not be doing marathons yet but I am exercising AND losing weight which is way more than I did before! So I will switch it up so I don't get bored and continue to do intervals. I also realized if I do get injured there are still all kind of alternative exercises I can do to keep active. I just have to keep exercising and eating healthy.

(<http://www.m.webmd.com/fitness-exerc.../.../exercise-lose-weight>) (<http://www.livestrong.com/.../111658-exercise-maximum-weigh.../...>)

Julia Klaus - Why You Shouldn't Count Calories

Are you eating (practically) NOTHING (but broccoli and salad) and still not losing weight? Do you feel defeated and discouraged because the scale is not moving? Are you tired? Do you have to MAKE yourself workout because you have NO energy? Are you grumpy, hungry, grumpy? Maybe you are still buying into a philosophy that is hurting you. For my research I chose "Why you shouldn't count calories". I choose this for personal reasons. Last year, I participated in a Dr. assisted weight loss. This included blood tests and a "weight loss plan" This plan limited my calories to 1200 with no other restrictions for eating healthy. (One thing this did do for me was to diagnose and address a low B vitamin count. I believe this was the only real positive) I was also supposed to work out 3 times a week, but the main concentration was counting calories. When I started this challenge, I automatically set my MFP calorie goal at 1200, after all, thats what the Dr. ordered. The 1st and 2nd week, I lost 4lbs and was very excited. Then my weight loss stopped. In my 3rd-4th week I added almost the whole 4 lbs back. Discouraging!!! My friend, Kelly Chamberlain Radank mentioned in passing that I may have my calorie goal too low.(Is that even possible? I thought we were dieting (sorry, "changing our lifestyles") to lose weight???) This was my first consideration on the matter. I began my research and realized that my calorie goal was way too low. I was tired, discouraged, grumpy and hungry. (My husband said I should mention that I was GRUMPY. Have I mentioned that yet? LOL) I did not have much energy and workouts wore me out. This week, I set my goal at the recommended 1600-1800 calories and didn't really worry too much if I went over (oh, my!!). I was much happier. This week was much easier. I had more energy, my workouts were stronger, I felt better. I really was still very doubtful that I would lose weight, but, as the lower calorie goal had not worked either, I figured that, as long as I didn't gain, I was ok. I LOST 4lbs. How is that possible? I am still not sure. The research makes logical sense BUT it goes against a lifetime of "weight loss=starvation" philosophy. (I know, I know... we are not "dieting", we are making a lifestyle change, but I still want to lose weight!!) I still have a calorie

goal in MFP. I just don't think I am self disciplined enough to have NO goal. I am going to continue to follow the plan of Healthy Eating, no sugary treats, cooking "from scratch", LOTS of fruits and veggies, LOTS of water, and NOT extremely restricting my calories. It is not easy. MFP gives me the "if every day were like today" and I wish it said I would be SKINNY in 5 weeks, but, restricting calories was NOT working and this is easier, healthier, and I am losing weight. It is an ongoing experiment for me. I will keep you informed.

FYI The websites that helped me the most; The first one is to let you know how many calories you should consume (at the very least.) WAY more than you think! So, go against the flow! Stop limiting your good, healthy calories. Be happy, healthy, and lose weight. Sounds like infomercial but, there it is. The research proves it. Take the plunge. If the scale is not moving anyway, give it a try. What do you have to lose? (For me it is 30lbs, and an addiction to Coke)

Copy and paste to see this one:

http://caloriescount.com/free_Mod_my_plan_assessment.aspx

This is an explanation of WHY you should eat MORE to lose weight! Interesting!:
<http://www.coachcalorie.com/not-eating-enough-calories-to-.../>

Amanda Vann - Why You Shouldn't Count Calories

I've always heard counting calories was a waste of time, but when I do it I do better. Isn't that what MFP is for? As I searched, this guy had probably the best argument. Long term counting is just plain frustrating, especially when you don't see the results you think you should be getting according to your "calories". Calories marked on food are not 100% accurate, how much you burn each day is not accurate because there are too many factors to work in. Well, every calorie is different, protein calories affect your body differently than carb calories. Getting your 1500 calories in for the day sounds good but not when it's 1500 of junk food. Your metabolic rate changes with what you eat and what you do. It adjusts and poor quality calories and low calorie diets will mess with your metabolic rate and your hormones. Our bodies are smart, God made them, they will adjust themselves quickly to survive. Bad calories will make bad signals go through your body/ metabolic rate/and hormones. They need good quality food and just enough for the day. MFP helps us see what's going in our mouths, and to adjust, but learning the FIT way and making it habit will help when you don't have MFP around. <http://tomnikkola.com/9-reasons-why-counting-calories-is-d.../>

Emilie Marston - Why You Shouldn't Count Calories

I chose why you shouldn't count calories for my research. I am the worst at calorie counting...I am so OCD about it. I try so hard to make sure I stay under the 1200 calorie limit that MFP has given me for weight loss. Here is the thing though. This challenge has been the worst for me with weight loss and it's been discouraging. However, I came across this article and it just made sense to me. Here are her main points...if you want to read more I will share the link

1. Calorie counting can make it hard to eat when you're hungry, and stop when you're full.
2. It's socially restrictive.
3. It encourages obsessive thoughts about food.
4. It's generally unsustainable.
5. It makes travel a total pain in the butt.
6. It sometimes gives people an excuse to eat more junk.
7. It's unnecessary for most people.

"Calories count, but you don't need to count them forever to get lean.

If I have to make a hard decision, I'll often imagine another person I trust looking at my situation and making the choice for me. In this case, that person would probably have disowned me for being such an obsessive weirdo about counting calories.

It's time for a change.

Calorie counting works. It's a good idea to check your food intake sometimes. However, you can stay lean without counting calories, and it will be much easier.

For the reasons listed above, it's time to stop. The truth is I've hated calorie counting for a long-time, but I didn't think I could reach my goals without it.

So can you."

You can go on the link and read her explanations under each point...it was very helpful for me. <https://evidencemag.com/lose-weight-calorie-counting>

Barb Metzinger - The Glycemic Index

Glycemic Index (GI) is a measurement carried out on carbohydrate-containing foods and their impact on our blood sugar. In other words, instead of counting the total amount of carbohydrates in foods in their unconsumed state, GI measures the actual impact of these foods on our blood sugar.

The GI represents the total rise in a person's blood sugar level following consumption of the food; it may or may not represent the rapidity of the rise in

blood sugar. The steepness of the rise can be influenced by a number of other factors, such as the quantity of fat eaten with the food. *wikipedia

"Over the past 15 years, low-GI diets have been associated with decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, stroke, depression, chronic kidney disease, formation of gall stones, neural tube defects, formation of uterine fibroids, and cancers of the breast, colon, prostate, and pancreas.

"Most healthcare organizations use a "high," medium" and "low" rating system for GI. Using this system, foods get classified in the following way:

Low GI Medium GI High GI

0-55 56-69 70 or greater

*quoted from whfoods.org.

Refer to this partial list supplied by Harvard Medical School to see that the GI of foods that we in FIT are trying to eat more of (fruits and veggies, mostly) are lower than the ones we are trying to eat less of.

http://www.health.harvard.edu/.../glycemic_index_and_glycemic...

I am concluding, in my own mind, right now, about this subject in relation to our goals on FIT, that really, we should focus on our goals as outlined by FIT. I look at the charts and all the research that's been done and it tells me one thing. We're on the right track. Fruits and veggies in are good, white breads and sugary cereals not good, to put it simply. Studying the chart may help refine your ideas of the best veggies, but I don't think we need to stress about all the numbers. Thanks FIT!

Carla Ferner - The Glycemic Index

Explaining the Glycemic Index of Foods - excerpted from "It Starts With Food" by Dallas & Melissa Hartwig

The glycemic index (GI) is a numerical scale used to quantify how fast fifty grams of carbohydrate from a particular food can raise blood glucose level. Carbohydrates that break down quickly during digestion and release glucose rapidly into the bloodstream have a higher GI; carbohydrates that break down more slowly, releasing glucose more gradually into the bloodstream, have a lower GI. The "standard" used for the GI scale - the food to which other foods are compared - is either glucose (with a score of 100) or white bread (with a score of

70 to 73). White bread raises blood sugar very rapidly (high GI), while the starch in 100% whole-grain bread takes longer to break down into glucose (moderate GI). The lower GI score is largely a result of the additional fiber content of whole-grain flour, but eating a high GI food alongside other foods rich in fiber and fat will also lower the total GI of the meal. However, the GI does not give any indication of, well, ANYTHING ELSE relating to the health of these foods! It doesn't mention whether the food contains any problematic proteins, or what kind of sugars or fats it contains, or the bioavailability of the nutrients. It also doesn't tell you how much carbohydrate is contained in the food or how much insulin will be needed to manage blood glucose. In addition, GI doesn't take into account how much of that food is typically eaten in a serving. The GI of watermelon is very high (72), but how much watermelon do you normally eat - a slice or two? The GI of peanut M&Ms is much lower (33), but because they are supernormally stimulating and nutrient-poor, it's very easy to eat an entire bag. Which food do you think promotes better health? The glycemic index is largely irrelevant to making Good Food choices.

Ashley Gordon - The Glycemic Index

The Glycemic Index (GI) is a rating of carbohydrates from 1-100 according to the level they raise your blood sugar. Foods with a high GI are absorbed quickly into the body and raise your blood sugar. While foods with a low GI are absorbed and digested more slowly and result in only gradual raises of the blood sugar. A few years ago my doctor recommended for me to go on a low glycemic diet as he believed my weight loss problems were a result of insulin resistance (blood work later showed I did not have insulin resistance). Since then, I have used the Glycemic index as a guide for foods I should and should not eat. Foods with a lower glycemic index have great health benefits.

<http://www.glycemicindex.com/about.php>

Health benefits include lowering the risk for diabetes, Lowering the risk of heart disease, they curb inflammation, and help you to lose weight.

<http://www.besthealthmag.ca/.../4-reasons-to-eat-low-gi-foods...>

Tori Sylvest - The Glycemic Index

The glycemic index or (GI) is a number associated with a particular type of food that indicates the food's effect on a person's blood glucose (also called blood

sugar) level. The number typically ranges between 50 and 100, where 100 represents the standard, an equivalent amount of pure glucose. The GI represents the total rise in a person's blood sugar level following consumption of the food; it may or may not represent the rapidity of the rise in blood sugar. The steepness of the rise can be influenced by a number of other factors, such as the quantity of fat eaten with the food. The GI is useful for understanding how the body breaks down carbohydrates and only takes into account the available carbohydrate (total carbohydrate minus fiber) in a food. Although the food may contain fats and other components that contribute to the total rise in blood sugar, these effects are not reflected in the GI. The glycemic index is usually applied in the context of the quantity of the food and the amount of carbohydrate in the food that is actually consumed. A related measure, the glycemic load (GL), factors this in by multiplying the glycemic index of the food in question by the carbohydrate content of the actual serving. Watermelon has a high glycemic index, but a low glycemic load for the quantity typically consumed. Fructose, by contrast, has a low glycemic index, but can have a high glycemic load if a large quantity is consumed.

GI tables are available that list many types of foods and their GIs. Some tables also include the serving size and the glycemic load of the food per serving. A practical limitation of the glycemic index is that it does not measure insulin production due to rises in blood sugar. As a result, two foods could have the same glycemic index, but produce different amounts of insulin. Likewise, two foods could have the same glycemic load, but cause different insulin responses. Furthermore, both the glycemic index and glycemic load measurements are defined by the carbohydrate content of food. For example when eating steak, which has no carbohydrate content but provides a high protein intake, up to 50% of that protein can be converted to glucose when there is little to no carbohydrate consumed with it. But because it contains no carbohydrate itself, steak cannot have a glycemic index. For some food comparisons, the "insulin index" may be more useful.

GI values are generally divided into three categories:

Low GI: 1 to 55

Medium GI: 56 to 69

High GI: 70 and higher

For example, raw carrots have a GI value of 35. This means that if you eat enough carrots to consume 1.8 ounces (50 grams) of digestible carbohydrates (sugars and starches), your blood glucose level after eating the carrots will be 35 percent of the blood glucose level after eating 1.8 ounces (50 grams) of pure glucose.

For example, an English muffin made with white wheat flour has a GI value of 77. A whole-wheat English muffin has a GI value of 45. Comparing these values can help guide healthier food choices. Stick to eating foods with a lower glycemic index.

Kelsey Spickes - Fat Doesn't Make You Fat

For many years, the prevailing dietary wisdom in the United States has been that fat, especially saturated fat, is both harmful to one's health and leads to weight gain. Recent research, however, is throwing serious doubt on this theory. The research from the mid-20th century that supposedly linked saturated fat consumption to heart disease has been debunked [1], and new research is showing that a diet with plenty of fat actually leads to lower rates of heart disease and diabetes, as well as increased weight loss [2, 3]. However, the idea that "fat is bad" has become so ingrained in our dietary consciousness that many people still believe a low fat diet is the healthiest way to eat.

The idea that fat is bad became popular in the late 1970s and was especially prevalent in the 80s and 90s. Nutritional experts and even the government recommended a low fat diet for all Americans, regardless of their individual health circumstances [4]. The classic food pyramid, introduced by the USDA in 1992, is based on this principle, with large portions of grains on the bottom and fats in the tiny "Use Sparingly" category on the top [5]. During these decades, highly processed, low fat foods replaced less processed or unprocessed foods in the standard American diet, such as the exchange of butter for margarine. Curiously, this shift in diet coincides with the beginning of the obesity epidemic in the United States [1]. While that correlation on its own does not prove anything, it is food for thought.

When people limit the amount of fat in their diet, they usually compensate by increasing their intake of carbohydrates, especially starches and sugars [6]. And many low fat foods contain added sugar to make them more palatable [4]. The body converts these excess carbohydrates directly to fat. Heavy consumption of carbohydrates also causes a spike in insulin, which triggers the body to lay down more fat reserves. The subsequent drop in blood sugar after this insulin spike

causes a feeling of hunger, which leads to more eating and a continuation of the vicious cycle [7, 8].

In contrast, fat leads to a feeling of satiety, allowing a person to feel full after eating less. That feeling of fullness lasts much longer than after a carb-heavy meal, so a person can go longer intervals without feeling the need to snack [7]. Counterintuitively, a diet that is high in fat can actually be better for weight loss than a low fat diet. A study has shown that a high fat, low carb diet (eating to fullness) resulted in more than twice the amount of weight loss as a low fat, calorie restricted diet [3]. A similar effect is also apparent in the so-called "French Paradox," a term used to describe the fact that the French eat high amounts of saturated fat and yet have low rates of cardiovascular disease and obesity [1].

Of course, not all fats are equally beneficial. When adding fat to your diet, it is important to consider the quality of the fat sources in question. Here is a list of healthy fats [6, 7] to add to your diet:

- Olives and olive oil
- Coconuts and coconut oil
- Butter made from raw, grass-fed organic milk
- Raw nuts, such as almonds or pecans
- Organic, pastured egg yolks
- Avocados
- Grass-fed meats
- Palm oil
- Unheated, organic nut oils
- Fatty fish rich in omega-3 fats (e.g. sardines, mackerel, herring, and wild salmon)

I hope this encourages you to do more research about dietary fat and to embrace it as a good and necessary part of a healthy diet.

Sources:

[1]: <http://authoritynutrition.com/6-graphs-the-war-on-fat-was-.../> "6 Graphs That Show Why the 'War' on Fat Was a Huge Mistake."

[2]: <http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/91/3/535.abstract> "Meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies evaluating the association of saturated fat with cardiovascular disease."

[3]: <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/full/10.1210/jc.2002-021480> "A Randomized Trial Comparing a Very Low Carbohydrate Diet and a Calorie-Restricted Low Fat Diet on Body Weight and Cardiovascular Risk Factors in Healthy Women."

[4]: <http://jhmas.oxfordjournals.org/content/63/2/139.full> "How the Ideology of Low Fat Conquered America."

[5]: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_pyramid_%28nutrition%29... "USDA 1992 Food Guide Pyramid."

[6]: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-.../fat-health_b_4343798.html "Fat Does Not Make You Fat."

[7]: <http://articles.mercola.com/.../pasta-not-bacon-makes-you-fat...> "Pasta, Not Bacon, Makes You Fat, But How?"

[8]: http://blog.massivehealth.com/infogr.../Carbs_are_killing_you/ "[Infographic] Carbs Are Killing You."

Rhonda McCollough - Hormones in our Food

Most of us KNOW that the USDA and FDA allows a lot of stuff in our foods that aren't really good for us, but I never really KNEW much about what those things were until I joined FIT! I think this was partly because I didn't WAN'T to know!

A few years ago scientists began studying the connection between hormones added to food products, milk especially, and early puberty in young girls. Having 2 girls myself this is something I became interested in!

Since the 80's these ideas have been popping up all over; the idea that growth steroids added to our foods could be affecting our bodies detrimentally.

Our bodies naturally produce the estrogen and testosterone and when it doesn't we develop many problems. These are the SAME hormones being injected and fed to the animals we are getting our food from! Along with these "sex" hormones many animals are receiving steroids to increase growth! We can logically see that by eating the meat from these animals, or consuming their by-products, we can be ingesting hormones that our bodies do not need!

Some of the diseases thought to be connected to hormones in our foods are:

- Breast and prostate cancer
- Thyroid disease
- Obesity and diabetes
- Endometriosis, uterine fibroids and infertility
- Immune-related disease, such as asthma or allergies

along with other issues like early puberty in girls!

Many labs are still exploring these connections to try and prove how true the statements are. There are some precautions you can take to protect yourself and your family from extra hormones...

1. Eat low-fat meats and dairy products. Shop for dairy products labeled “rBGH-free,” which means they were produced without the use of recombinant bovine growth hormone.
2. Eat “certified” organic when possible.
3. Avoid pesticide hormones. Peel your fruits and vegetables, especially if they have been waxed, or wash them with a vegetable wash or diluted vinegar to remove surface pesticide residues.
4. Use BPA-free cans and bottles.

Jaclynn Howell - Hormones in our Food

So I chose the subject of Hormones in our food. I wanted to look into this more because I have always heard that this is a problem and it could be the cause of girls hitting puberty at an early age. I have two girls ages 3 and 1. I buy the sandwich meat that is organic and hormone free just because I have always been told that it is better for you. I think it is true but after some internet research I haven't found an article backing up the facts that I have been told.

In the early 1930's they were using types of hormones that caused cancer. In the early 50's the FDA changed the regulations and they started using different hormones but still hormones none the less. Over the years the regulations have improved.

I was not pleased with the information the internet provided for me. I can't imagine that all the stories and "facts" that have been told to me by personal trainers, doctors, and dietary nutritionist over the years are all untrue.

I plan to research this subject more. It just goes to prove that someone is doing a good job on making you read what they want you to in the top search engines on the internet.

Cheryl Gillam - Diastasis

30-40% of women have this and most don't even know it. I didn't until I read about it . I was wondering why I was losing weight but still wasn't getting that flat tummy. Multiple births or surgery can cause the stomach muscles to weaken and/or stretch. Certain exercises or heavy lifting can actually make it worse . Best way to reduce the tummy area is to strengthen the inner abdominal muscles first. You can do this with breathing exercises and/or the following:

<http://inspiredrd.com/.../.../5-exercises-to-heal-diastasis.html>

Melinda Dove - Recipes and Tips for Serving “Clean” Meals at Social Functions

I attend on average one (school, church, or birthday) party and some type of “Family Feast” every month. (Stop judging me! I’m a parent, teacher, and youth pastor’s wife.) The old “me” was delighted at every unhealthy spread set before me. I felt like some of these foods—especially desserts—were going to make the food list in Heaven! Two things are emphasized at every holiday: Having an “it’s a holiday—eat what you want” attitude and indulging in sugary traditions. Since joining FIT in August, the new “me” is horrified and disturbed that we have accepted shoveling junk into our own bodies and into children’s bodies.

Here are some tips for serving “clean” meals.

- #1: Use the FIT recipe file to plan your menu
- Plan to cook yourself instead of purchasing pre-made items
- Prepare ahead of time (Have your ingredients on hand)
- If you are the one planning, offer plenty of healthy choices

These are some recipes I have tested at my functions:

- Appetizers: tomato, basil, and mozzarella skewers, veggie pizza, peanut butter and celery
- Main Course: Pulled chicken, make-your-own personal pizzas, whole wheat spaghetti, chicken wraps
- Sides: spaghetti sauce over quinoa and steamed veggies, sweet potato fries, avocado and Greek yogurt chicken salad
- Snacks: pretzels, fresh fruit (grapes, strawberries, blueberries, apples), cheese, nuts, popcorn
- Desserts: fruit cobbler, apple streusel, no bake bars, banana bread

I still love food, but I love to eat things that I don't feel guilty about ten seconds after I eat it even more! With Pinterest and our FIT file, we are running out of excuses to not serve healthy meals. Side note: It is also common sense to be grateful for what someone else is serving—especially if she is your mother-in-law!

Eatingwell.com and cookinglight.com

Catherine Moraga - Eating Healthy and Clean on a Budget

I decided to write about eating clean on a budget! Budgeting is honestly one of my favorite topics, because it's something my husband and I have become proficient in. #daveramsey

1. Decide how much food money you have for a given month. Bonus points if you get that cash out and put it in your "food" envelope.
2. Research your grocery store ad when the preview comes out, THEN make your list. Take advantage of your store's rewards/coupon system.
3. Decide what produce you will buy organic and what you will take home and wash. <http://www.milehimama.com/vinegar-wash-for-fruit-and-veggi.../>
4. Buy in bulk whenever possible. To stick to your original budget, choose 2 or 3 items to buy in bulk, and freeze if possible.
4. Make delicious things out of cheap ingredients! I recently made these (<http://penniesandpancakes.blogspot.com/.../crockpot-refried-b...>) and froze most of them. I also buy heavy cream when it is on clearance and make butter

and freeze it. And I can usually make something delicious with that buttermilk too.

5. Decide what things to make yourself versus prepared food. I am a SAHM with just one munchkin, so I have the time to make things like vanilla extract, peanut butter/almond butter, breads, refried beans, butter, baby food (yowza, that stuff can be expensive!), crackers, ice cream, etc. KNOW THYSELF! I do buy pre-washed organic salads and veggies, because I know I will eat them. Otherwise they will sit in my fridge and wilt.

6. Commit to basically one store to do your shopping. Yes, there are some things to get online, some to get at Whole Foods or Costco, but in the end you usually benefit from buying from mostly one store.

7. Lastly, take advantage of FIT and Pinterest for healthy ideas!

Whitney Minge - Eating Clean and Whole on a Budget

I recently read that the average hospital stay in the US costs \$18,000. That's expensive! A lot of hospital visits could be prevented if we took time to cut out junk food! I personally would rather invest in my health than buy the cheapest food and pay for it in the long run. I love saving money so I was really excited when I saw this topic. Here are just a few ideas.

1. Grow your own produce (If you have the space and time)

Planting your own garden is so rewarding and a great workout. I still have a lot of veggies in my freezer from my garden last year. I typically try to jam-pack my garden with green beans, carrots, tomatoes, zucchini, strawberries, and herbs to last us through the winter. I freeze, dry and can a lot of our produce.

2. Be bold

One of my biggest pet peeves is seeing fruit trees untouched during the summer months. I've asked people if I can "help" clean up their yard (all of the fruit on the ground) and pick their fruit! Last year I picked close to 40 pounds of cherries for FREE!!! The worst thing that can happen is someone will tell you no.

3. Plan

Take time each week or month to plan your meal. Little trips to the store can add up fast, I try to only go to the grocery stores one day a week. I plan several meatless meals, at least one salad a day, and lots of easy healthy snacks. I rarely buy unhealthy snack food. If my 3 year old daughter gets hungry she is allowed to eat fruits, veggies, cheese, or meat. My husband and I decided a couple years ago to stop buying unhealthy snacks and it has saved us a lot of money each week.

4. Find out when your local stores put their food on clearance

Fred Meyer typically puts their food on clearance Wednesday morning. I love walking around Freddy's looking for their clearance stickers! If fresh veggies are extremely cheap I buy a ton of veggies and freeze them. If you live in the Tacoma area you should check out Valley Liquidation!! Valley goes to local auctions and buys food in bulk and they sell their items for unbeatable prices. Today I went to Valley and filled up my cart with fresh produce for only \$30 and half of it was organic!

5. Buy in bulk

Once a month I go to Costco and buy bulk items. For example, it's much cheaper to buy a gallon of olive oil than the small pretty bottles and the larger bottles keep the oil from being oxidized. I buy butter, nuts, beans, rice, chicken broth, frozen fruit, frozen veggies and much more in bulk.

I've bought a portion of a grass feed cow from a local farmer! It's was a lot of money upfront, but it saved us a ton of money in the long run.

Ashley Webster - Eating Healthy and Clean on a Budget

Eating clean and whole on a budget- not easy but worth every penny!

I am the mother of 5 children and an assistant pastor's wife. Which is basically saying instead of a shoe string budget we live on a fishing line one lol. God is good and always provides for our family, but that doesn't negate my responsibility to be fiscally conservative and creative at times wink emoticon.

#1. That being said, it's important to KNOW what your budget is first- then you work back from there. So first establish your budget!! I really apply the 80/20 rule to our family because being in the ministry I try to always be grateful for how God supplies our needs and sometimes that is in the form of a family giving us cereal for the kids or McDonalds gift cards so while I try to eat clean 90% of the time, it's

not always sensible. Anyways, once you establish your budget you should make a menu.

#2. I have a 4 week rotating menu and sometimes I will add in something new to see how the fam likes it and if it's a hit I add it into the rotation. You will be surprised at how cutting out the junk (cereal, prepackaged snacks, chips, little Debbie's, etc) will give you so much more room in your budget. We have AT LEAST 2 nights a week of meatless dishes. This also saves money! Pick recipes you know your family likes and convert it to a clean recipe.

#3. Food Prep. This is such an important step and one that many busy families overlook. You will not get much shelf life out of lettuce, veggies, and fruit if they are not stored properly. We get groceries every other Friday evening and I put everything away that night as is. I then spend about 2 hours the next morning cleaning out my fridge and prepping food. I make a huge pot of jasmine rice to add to meals throughout the week. I make a large crock pot of taco chicken to throw on salads or for my kids to eat in tortillas. I wash and chop all veggies and fruit and store them in airtight containers in the fridge (minus avacados, bananas, etc). You can also go ahead and run a few heads of cauliflower thru the food processor to have ready for cauliflower fried rice or cauliflower crust pizza.

#4. Knowing when to use what. I make the freshest meals first. Meaning things I know will go bad sooner I cook with first. Then towards the end of our 2 weeks I make more soups and stews and have a tendency to do more thrown together dinners with the veggies and things that are left. If you use canned goods use them towards the end of your grocery budget time because they will last longer.

#5. Make as many things homemade as you can- ITS CHEAPER!!! Make chicken stock and marinara sauce and black beans in the crockpot. You can make these base cooking ingredients in larger quantities and without the added ingredients. And it will help your budget smile emoticon.

**tips and tricks-

If you cannot afford organic produce there is a recipe online for a veggie wash that contains vinegar and is completely natural and will kill pesticides. I strongly recommend this!!!

Where you shop is important. I get 80% of our groceries at Aldi (if you don't have one I am so sorry!) because it's amazing! I also get my fresh herbs, some produce, Ezekial bread, etc at Giant Eagle. They have great sales on produce! I got organic gala apples (5 lb bags) buy one get one free a couple months ago. Just keep your

eyes open. I don't coupon because most coupons are for the boxed food that we don't eat so it doesn't help me. I also think buying shares in farms is a really good idea if you have access to one! The best time to sign up is the Fall for the next Summer season- the shares go fast! And if you have a deep freezer it's always a good a idea to take a small chunk of your tax return and buy a whole or half grass fed cow. Then you always have great beef on hand!

Well, this is result of years of trial and error and research. I hope this helps someone else!!! Sorry so long

Paula Williams - Eating Healthy and Clean on a Budget

My research is eating whole foods on a budget. Would like to research this further but for now this is what I have found. Whole food according to Wikipedia are food that are unprocessed and unrefined, or processed and refined as little as possible before being consumed.

1. Learn to cook dried beans, 1/2 the cost of canned.
2. double one meal a week and freeze for those crazy days so you won't be tempted to go out to eat.
3. Don't buy cereal, make oatmeal instead.
4. pick your own veggies from pick your own farms and then freeze extra for winter.
5. Buy a 1/4 or 1/2 cow depending on your family size,
6. make your own bread.
7. visit farm markets in season
8. Ask for seconds at farm markets.
9. Ask about buying in bulk and go in together with a friend.
10. Join a co-op.
11. Plant a garden.
12. Make bread pudding, croutons, or bread crumbs with old bread instead of throwing it away.

13. Make your own chicken broth,
14. Utilize the stalks from the broccoli crowns into soups.
15. grow your own herbs.
16. Make your own salad dressing.
17. cook from scratch.

Rebekah Olheiser - Metabolism Dysfunction

I recently finished a book on the subject of metabolism. I asked, and was given the green light to sum this book up for my research this week.

Have you ever eaten what you thought was a healthy breakfast of some fruit, whole grain toast, or whole grain cereal, only to find yourself starving less than 2 hours later? I have. I learned through trial and error that my body needs protein and fat to stay satiated, but after reading this book, I have learned some of the science behind that phenomenon.

It is called Metabolism Dysfunction, and if you've been counting the calories, sweating it out in your workouts, and everything else you've been told to do to lose weight, and it just isn't working, your metabolism just might love to store fat, and it hate to let go of it! Metabolism Dysfunction (MD) is when your cells are resistant to insulin. The sensitivity of your cells to insulin is crucial for weight management because insulin directs the fuel to your cells, in order for you to have the energy to perform all their behind the scenes day to day functions. If you have MD, your cells don't get the fuel they need and you become ravenously hungry, that's your body telling you to do whatever you need to do to get sugar into it. Another problem with MD is the extra sugar that can't get into your cells, well your body remembers that it was "starving" today so it's not going to let that happen again, and the extra fuel gets stored as fat.

The good news? This dysfunction, MD, responds very quickly to the right kind of eating. I'm guessing a lot of you who have joined FIT probably stumbled upon exactly the kind of diet that can correct your metabolism, if you noticed your weight go down and you were no longer hungry, tired, cranky, weak, and craving sugar.

The 2nd half of the book outlines the recommended diet to correct MD; I admit I skimmed this part. The MD diet seems to be one that focuses on clean food, a reasonable number of calories, consuming 64 of water a day, and healthy doses

of protein at each and every meal. I noticed that some of the recommendations and recipes included lowfat dairy and sugar free foods, I know there's a lot of mixed opinions on the subject, however, as with all things, take what can be helpful to you and disregard the rest. The MD plan even allows what it calls "my nights" which is basically the same thing as a cheat meal. The book also has a section with recipes that concur with the MD plan; several of them look very tasty and I plan on incorporating them into our menu and if any of them are winners, I shall surely let you know.

Samantha Miller - Medicinal Benefits of Natural Foods

There are so many medicinal benefits to natural foods. Too many to get into in just this little article, so I'll pick 2: apples and almonds.

First apples. There are many benefits to eating apples on a daily basis. The saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," really has truth to it. Apples help greatly to regulate blood sugars in diabetics. They contain properties which decreases the need for insulin. Apples are believed to help prevent certain cancers including colon, liver, and breast.

Second are almonds. Not that it has much to do with the topic, but these are my favorite snack. Almonds are loaded up with "healthy fats" which help to lower cholesterol levels. Low cholesterol prevents plaque build up in your arteries which is very important in the health of the heart and brain. Healthy arteries play in the role of preventing strokes and heart attacks. Another benefit of almonds is cosmetic. The oils from almonds are known to prevent wrinkles. Who doesn't love that?!?!

While there are so many more foods that I did not cover, I hope that you found this information interesting and helpful.

Information obtained from naturalfoodbenefits.com and from my 4 years of nursing school & 5 years nursing experience.

Sarah LeClercq - Benefits of Essential Oils

I have been interested in essential oils for a while now, so when I saw that it was a topic that could be researched I knew that is what I wanted to do. About a month ago I was in Boston with my husband and a church meeting and I started to get sick. The host pastor's wife uses essential oils and gave me some to try and it helped so much and did not have any of the side effects that I experience from over the counter cold medicines. Essential oils can be beneficial to your health,

beauty regime, and household cleaning. It is a learning curve and Pinterest is my favorite to find new recipes for what each oil can do. The benefits of essential oils include: helps you relax, helps detox, helps with treating acne, helps with digestive issues, clears sinuses, relieve headaches, and can be used as a disinfectant. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/.../benefits-of-essential-oils_n... You also need to exercise caution when using essential oils. You need to know which ones are not harmful to the skin, which ones you can ingest, which ones need to be diluted. Essential oils are very strong and do not require a whole lot at one time. Be familiar with the benefits and know what you are using and why. <http://wellnessmama.com/26519/risks-essential-oils/>