

FIT TO BE HEALTHY

by Eve Lees

'Carb' is not a four-letter word

We need carbohydrates (carbs). They're our chief source of energy – like gasoline is to your car. Carbs fuel your body and your brain too. The richest sources are anything that grows from the earth – fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes. These are whole foods or *complex carbohydrates*, which our body breaks down during digestion.

What we don't need is the junk carbs so prevalent among our food choices today: the processed, refined foods. These are whole foods or complex carbs that man has broken down and changed before digestion.

Sadly, misinformation has made carb another four-letter word. Low-carb diets tell us carbs are the reason we become insulin resistant and gain weight, as indicated by the rising incidents of obesity and diabetes. But carbohydrates were around long before these high disease rates occurred. Processed carbs weren't. Therefore, carbohydrates aren't the problem, say nutritionists. It's the processed, refined carbohydrates that throw our bodies out of balance. If we had left carbs in their natural state, they wouldn't have become a problem.

The body is designed to slowly and methodically break down a whole food into the nutrients it needs. Refined sugars and processed foods are already broken down and absorbed very quickly. Eating them too frequently is confusing and stressful to the body. Nutritionists advise not to follow a low-carb diet, but a "proper carb diet".

The human race is getting sicker. It's not just obesity and diabetes, but cancers and heart disease are also on the rise. Our chips-and-pop-culture kids are getting fatter and developing depression and diabetes along with it. Processed, refined foods are a contributing factor to declining health. They lack the nutrition needed to strengthen our bodies and our immunity systems. Ditto for the restrictive low-carb diets, say nutritionists. These diets lack fibre and many phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables – including nutrients that science hasn't discovered yet.

Perhaps the best strategy to correct an insulin imbalance and lose the resulting weight is to eat more natural carbs and less of the carbs that can create an insulin problem — the junk food. If your carb choice isn't in a form Mother Nature created, it may not be a healthy choice. Cut back on the foods designed and altered by man. Choose an apple as a snack instead of a cookie or sports bar. Eat more fruits and vegetables, legumes and root vegetables, and whole grains.

Carbohydrates are not "bad" for us. We must avoid using the word *carbohydrate* when we really mean *processed, refined foods.*

Former newspaper journalist, Eve Lees, is a Nutritionist and a Certified Personal Trainer. Her health columns appear in several publications.

Feel better, look better

We've all heard about the importance of building strong bones and the role of exercise but how does it work?

Mechanical loading on the skeleton, such as walking, jumping rope, and weight training can never be matched for effectiveness by dietary calcium or other nutritional measures. This is because the pull of tendon on bone (tendons attach muscles to bones) actually stimulates the production of calcium in the bone.

Children and teens should eat right and be physically active and continue these behaviours as they age. Studies also show the strongest and densest bones are found in those who participate in a balanced fitness program of both aerobic activities and strength training.

Use the cross-training principle; participate in a variety of activities and sports.

— Eve Lees, editor, Personal Health Newsletter, www.artnews-healthnews.com

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Columnist

Size matters



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The easiest way to shed body fat - and the most overlooked factor - is to pay attention to serving sizes.

There's no better example of this than the "French Paradox". Researchers once speculated red wine was the reason many in France are slender and with a low incidence of heart disease. However, researchers now suspect it's because the French consume fewer calories daily than Americans and Canadians.

In a recent issue of Consumer Reports on Health, editor Ronni Sandroff commented that serving sizes in comparable restaurants in Paris and Philadelphia differed greatly. On average, servings were 25 percent larger in Philadelphia than Paris. Chinese cuisine meals were about 72 percent larger here than in Paris.

In grocery and convenience stores, the same differences apply; candy bars here are 41 percent larger than in Paris, soft drinks 52 percent larger, and yogurt cartons 82 percent larger.

A typical meal in Paris consists of very small servings, but of a wide variety of foods. Canadians typically eat larger servings of a limited variety of foods each day. The French meals provide less calories, yet more nutrients (vitamins, minerals, etc.) because of the wider range of foods they choose from daily. A greater intake of nutrients is probably another reason the French have healthier hearts!

Sandroff gives good advice in her editorial; at home, fill half your plate with vegetables, and keep the meat and starch serving to about 3-5 ounces each (that's about the size of your palm). Eating large portions will stimulate the body to store fat. This is a genetic defense mechanism to prepare the body for famine. Primitive man overate only when food was abundant, which was rare compared to our bountiful foods sources today. When we over eat, the body senses a possible upcoming famine and prepares the chemical reactions that stimulate the fat-storage processes.

Choose from a wider range of foods, in sensible portions, to ensure you stay healthy and slim.

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