



The Alternative Daily

FOOD &  
NUTRITION  
GUIDE

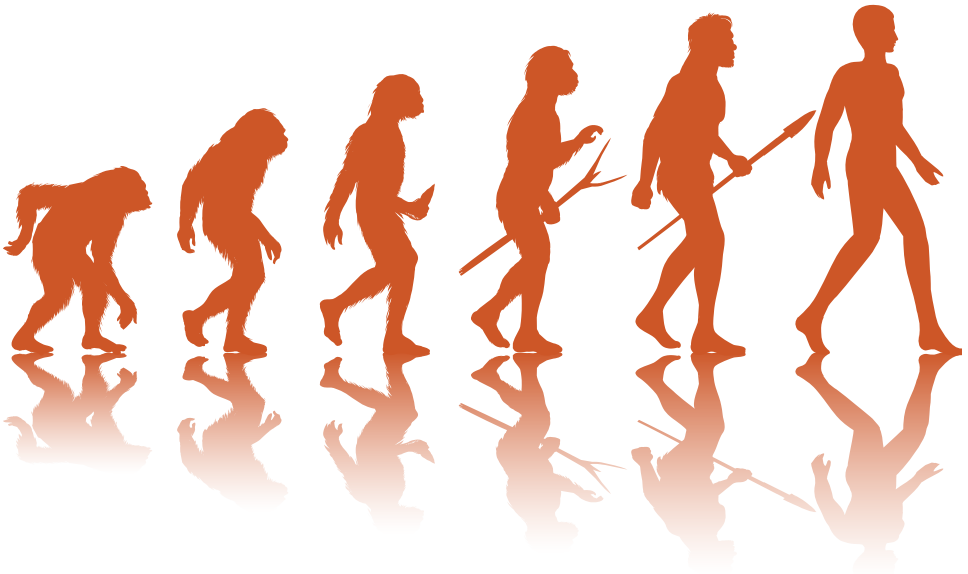




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Dr. Joshua Levitt, ND



Over the last few thousand years, our human species has built an amazingly complex civilization and made technological advances in every industry on (and off) this planet. Our progress as a species is astounding and even though we now find ourselves at the very top of the food chain, sadly, it seems that we've forgotten how to eat. One of the most simple tasks, and one that is absolutely critical to our survival has been lost in the whirlwind of productivity and technology of our modern day life. If you look in a bookstore or library, you'll find the shelves swollen with the latest titles that aim to help you lose weight or get healthy using food as your medicine. If you do a simple search on Amazon for books about "food", you'll find that there 362,174 choices! That's a whole heck of a lot of books about something that we should simply not need a manual to understand. Beyond the books, there are hundreds of thousands of experts that you can consult with in person or online for guidance



about what to eat. If you've got the money, you could pay over \$1,000/hour for expert advice about what to eat from celebrity doctors and nutritionists. I'm not kidding.

It's really crazy when you think about it. Imagine for a moment another intelligent mammal ... like an elephant needing expert advice on what to eat. It's hilarious to think how that conversation would go. So funny in fact that our team at The Alternative Daily decided we couldn't resist making a talking animals video just for you.

How did the question of what to eat become such a vexing problem?

The answer lies in the story of two of our most favorite things:  
**Sex and Ice Cream**

The human appetite for sex is all about survival. Life and death. It is probably our most primitive desire and it is a huge motivator of human behavior. From a purely biological standpoint, sex leads to babies ... and therefore to the survival of the species. That's why we like it. Survival.



If the desire for sex is a primary instinct ... then hunger for ice cream has got to be a really close second. Ice cream contains large amounts of sugar and fat. Sugar and fat help us gain weight and avoid dying of starvation. That's why we like it. Survival.



## Survival of the Fattest

For the vast majority of human history, the primary problem that our species has faced has been finding food. No matter where your ancestors come from, for thousands of years they all woke up every morning wondering if they would get enough to eat that day. As time went on, the people who were able to survive in these conditions were the ones who went on to reproduce ... and all of us on the planet today are the offspring of those survivors. Our ancestors were the ones who



made it through the winter, the ones who survived during the worst of times. They were able to survive because they had particular physical and psychological traits that gave them an advantage. The most important trait was the ability to store calories as fat that could be used in the future when the food supply ran out.

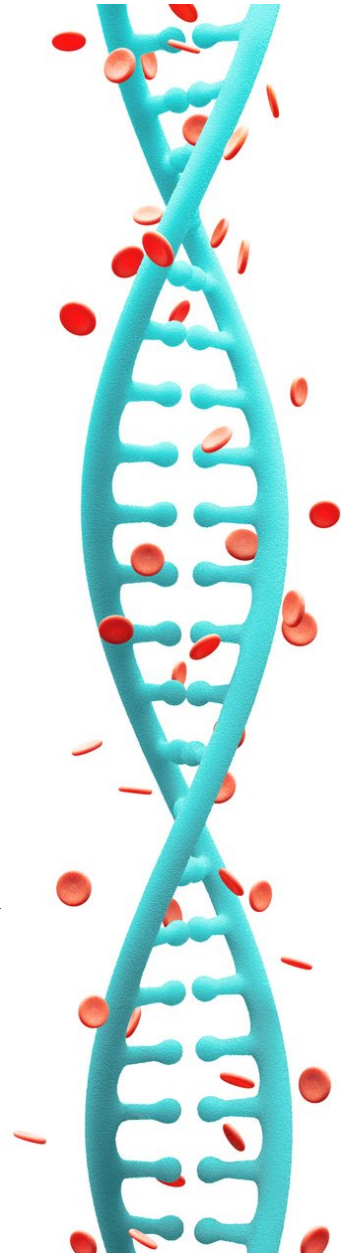
You've heard the term "survival of the fittest" - which implies that the organism that is the most "fit" or well suited to its environment is the one who will survive. Well, when it comes to thousands of years of human history ... it's really more accurate to say "survival of the fattest" because during periods of limited food supply, the fattest people are the ones who will survive. And that's exactly who our ancestors were.



Being able to store calories as fat is a huge advantage; but only when the food supply is scarce.

You see, times have changed dramatically in the last few years. As we've learned, for the vast majority of human history, our ancestors didn't have much to eat. But in the industrialized world, with advances in industrial agriculture, food production and processing ... calories are now readily available in huge amounts at minimal cost. It used to be a major effort for our ancestors to find calories. But today, we no longer need to hunt or gather ... we can get an unlimited supply of calories with almost no effort whatsoever.

We are living with stone aged genes ... our DNA is still sending daily messages to our brain that we must find food. And when we find it, we feel compelled to eat like we don't know when our next meal might be. But when the truth is that the next meal will be another feast of calories just a few hours from now ... we find ourselves in trouble. Our genes are totally out of sync with the environment we live in. Our bodies are adapted to a world where calories are hard to get ... but we've created a world where they are everywhere.





When genes and the environment are at odds like that, big problems start to emerge.

I grew up in Southern California, not far from the world famous San Diego Zoo. When I was a kid, I did a report about the zoo, and I learned that the polar bears there were being treated for depression. I may have only been in 7th grade, but back then I remember thinking that the poor bears were probably depressed because they were living in a zoo in San Diego! Polar bears are all about cold icy conditions. Over thousands of years, they have adapted and developed thick white fur, in addition, they possess amazing swimming and hunting skills that have allowed them to survive and thrive in Arctic cold. If a polar bear finds itself in hot dry weather (like San Diego), it is going to get sick and die. This is a prime example of the tragic but predictable outcome of living with genes that are out of sync with your environment.

Now, back to humans. As we've learned, we are adapted for survival in a world where food is scarce. That's why we love food so much. Especially the sugar and the fat. And just like the poor polar bears, we are living in an environment that is out of sync with our genetics. We are getting sick and dying as a result.



Virtually all of the major causes of death are related to this very problem. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer; research is crystal clear on this: 80% of these problems can be prevented simply by living and eating more in sync with our genes.



You may have noticed that in order to avoid getting sick and dying from over consumption of food and calories depends on you going against one of your most primitive urges. And you're right. Our desire to overconsume calories is buried deep in our brains and it is an exceedingly difficult - but not impossible - force to resist.

In my work with thousands of patients in over 15 years of practice, I have learned that there is really only one reliable way to overcome the power of that primal appetite. The solution lies in arming yourself with information and then using that information to develop new patterns of behavior that support your health.

The solution is to educate yourself about food, nutrition, and how it affects your health. This is your manual on how to do this.

### **Everyone is different:**

The rest of this guide will help you understand how food and nutrition can impact your health. Use it as a guide book to using food as medicine for better health. The information in this guide presents the fundamentals of healthy eating which applies to the majority of the population. When it comes to food, we are all different in terms of our preferences for taste, texture, and tolerability. If you find that any of the recommendations here do not work for you, that's fine. It is important that you let your body be your guide and learn to listen and respect the messages it gives you. There are certainly some things that are true for everyone (for example, high fructose corn syrup is not good for anyone), other foods may be good choices for some people but not for others.









When you consume high quality dietary protein, your body uses the acid in your stomach and special enzymes called proteases to break the protein chains apart into individual amino acids. Those amino acids are then absorbed into your bloodstream and used to build virtually all of the structural components and cellular machinery inside you body. Getting adequate amounts of these amino acids in the diet is critical for cellular functioning.

**You should eat clean protein at every meal.** This protein can come from animal or plant sources although plant sources are preferred. “Clean” refers to the health of the animal or plant that it came from. You’re probably asking “How am I supposed to know if my steak came from a healthy cow, if my egg came from a well-fed chicken, or if my beans grew on a vigorous vine?” Below, you’ll find useful information about each of the common dietary protein sources and how they can fit into your diet and your life.

### **Plant-based protein:**

#### **Soy:**

Although the soybean is a legume just like other beans, it is discussed separately here because it is so unique and so misunderstood. Compared to other beans, soybeans have an extraordinarily high protein content. They are also full of a naturally occurring compound called isoflavones which give them some important hormonal health activity. Their high protein content has made soybeans both a staple food and a globally





important commodity crop for centuries. The isoflavones and their hormonal activity has made soybeans the subject of decades of intense research and controversy about whether they are healthy or not.

Here's the answer: not all soybeans (or products made from them) are created equal. When non-genetically modified (non-GMO) soybeans are grown in organic conditions and are consumed in traditional forms like tofu, tempeh, and miso, they are perfectly healthy. Eating these foods up to three times per week is safe and healthy for everyone.



The dark side of the soybean story starts in massive farms that grow genetically modified beans on a large scale for industrial food production. The protein and the oil within those beans are extracted and used on a massive scale in livestock feed and in a wide variety of processed foods.

If you choose to eat soy, you should only ever eat organic, non-GMO soybeans and keep the focus should be on soy products like edamame, tofu, miso, and tempeh rather than the modern meat and dairy substitutes made from highly processed soybeans. Over 90% of the soybeans in our food supply come from genetically modified crops, so you must be very cautious and attentive about reading labels on soy products to make sure that they are from organic, non-GMO sources.



## Beans (legumes):

We're going cut straight to the bottom line here ... Eat more beans. Lentils, pintos, white, black, kidney, mung, garbanzo - all of them are an excellent source of clean protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Organic beans are ideal, and I encourage you to explore beyond the familiar varieties. There are hundreds of different types of beans; they come in a wide variety of colors, sizes, tastes and textures. You won't find the unusual beans in cans though, they usually come dry; which means you'll need to soak them overnight and then cook them. Although many local supermarkets and health



food stores now carry a wider array of more exotic beans, you can't beat the quality and variety of my two favorite online sources for legumes: For beans, go to Rancho Gordo ([www.ranchogordo.com](http://www.ranchogordo.com)) and for lentils, check out Timeless Seeds ([www.timelessfood.com](http://www.timelessfood.com)). They are all delicious ... and some of them are so beautiful, we keep them in glass jars on a shelf so we can admire them before we cook them.

We can't leave our discussion about beans without a quick reminder of that famous rhyme, "beans, beans the musical fruit ... the more you eat, the more you toot." It's true to an extent, and many people are concerned about adding beans to their diet because of a fear of developing gas and bloating. Here's the story: Beans contain some carbohydrate molecules that humans cannot digest. When these carbs reach the lower intestine, the ecosystem of bacteria and other organisms that live there will digest them for you. If you have a healthy, balanced ecosystem you can eat as many beans as you want and not notice a thing. If your ecosystem is unhealthy ... eating beans will prove that to you by giving you gas.



Don't worry though, for most people this problem is very easy to overcome. Here are the top 6 tips on avoiding gas from eating beans:

1. **Eat more beans.** Seriously. Start small and gradually increase the amount you eat and your body will “learn” to produce more of the enzymes necessary for digestion.
2. **The squish test.** Make sure that the beans you are eating are soft. You should be able to easily squish the bean between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. If you can't do the “squish test” your bean may be undercooked.
3. **Soak and rinse:** If you have dry beans and soak them overnight ... discard the water you soaked them in and cook them in new, fresh water. (Use the discarded soaking water on your houseplants or garden.)
4. **Kombu:** If you cook your own beans, adding a small piece of the seaweed “Kombu” to the cooking liquid can help to reduce the gas. You can find kombu at a health food store.
5. **Digestive enzymes:** A nutritional supplement that contains digestive enzymes can be a huge help to people who get gassy or bloated from beans or other foods. UpWellness has a digestive enzyme product called **UpZymes** that works great.
6. **Probiotics:** Eating fermented foods or taking a probiotic supplement can help to restore the balance of the organisms that live in the GI tract which can help to reduce gas production.



## Nuts and seeds:

Nuts and seeds are fantastic food. They are among the most health-promoting foods you can eat and you should aim to eat them every day. Nuts and seeds are natural nutrition powerhouses that provide an excellent source of plant based protein, healthy omega-3 oils, and loads of vitamins and minerals. People who eat nuts every day have been shown to live longer and have lower risks of chronic disease.

Because they are so easy to carry, have an excellent shelf life, and require no preparation or refrigeration ... it's hard to imagine a better snack food. Nut butters can be added to smoothies or can be a great snack combined with fruit or vegetables. It's easy to learn to make your own nut milks which are a tasty and a healthy alternative to cow's milk. Unless you are allergic, you should aim to eat 1-2 handfuls of raw or lightly roasted nuts every day.





## Animal protein:

Animal protein is one of the most controversial issues in all of human nutrition. Humans are omnivores ... which means that we can survive on foods derived from animals, plants, or both. In terms of maximizing human health and longevity, it is clear from mountains of research, that plant-based diets are ideal. “Plant-based” does not mean “only plants” ... it simply means that the majority of the food we eat should be from plants. Meat, fish and

fowl can be a part of healthy diet ... but these foods (especially the four leggeds and the birds) are grossly over eaten by most Americans. Michael Pollan described the ideal diet brilliantly in just a few words when he said: “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” Now on to our discussion of animal protein.

## Fish:

Because of its excellent amino acid profile and high levels of healthy omega-3 oils, fish is unquestionably the healthiest source of animal protein. Unfortunately, finding a clean source is not always so easy. Wild or farm-raised, the flesh of a fish will contain the toxins and pollutants in the water it swims in and in the food that

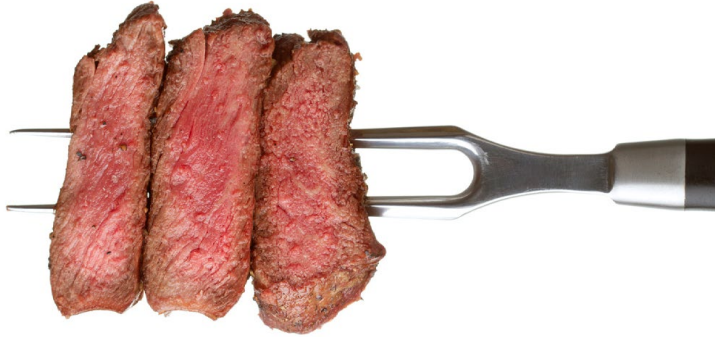




it eats. My favorite choices for the cleanest and most eco-friendly fish choices are wild Alaskan salmon, farmed arctic char, sardines, anchovies, herring, as well as the occasional Alaskan halibut, mahi-mahi and black cod. As a general rule, swimming fish are cleaner than bottom feeders or filter feeding animals like lobster, catfish, crab, clams and mussels. An excellent source for further information about the cleanest (and most eco-friendly) fish sources can be found at <http://seafood.edf.org/> You should aim to eat fish from the approved list at least 3 times per week.

## Meat:

You should only eat meat from organic, grass-fed, wild, or pasture-raised animals. Meat from factory farmed, grain-fed cows and



pigs is toxic food. It is one of the most important foods to avoid. Eating meat is not the problem, it's the health of the animals that it comes from that should concern you. Conventional factory farms raise hormone treated animals on unnatural diets in crowded and confined spaces. These unhealthy conditions increase the risk of infectious diseases so animals are also regularly treated with antibiotics. There is no place for this sort of meat in your diet. The types of fats and oils that are present in wild or pasture-raised animals are substantially different and far healthier than the fats in conventionally fed animals. Organic, grass-fed, wild or pasture-raised meat is acceptable but should be kept to less than three meals per week.





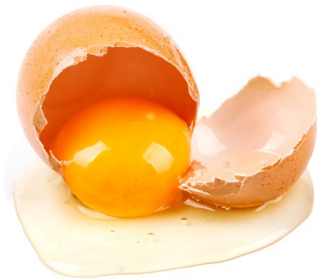
## Poultry:

Meat from a healthy chicken or turkey can be a good source of lean, high-quality protein. Unfortunately, the poultry that you'll find at most supermarkets comes from birds raised on unnatural diets, in cramped quarters, on huge farms that aren't really concerned about your health. Meat from these farms contains residues of the chemicals in the feed as well as the hormones and antibiotics that were administered to the birds. You should only eat poultry that is free range and USDA certified organic. Organic, free-range chicken and turkey is safe to consume up to 3 meals per week.



## Eggs:

Eggs are good for you. There ... I said it. They are full of high quality protein, healthy essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and carotenoids. The yolks do indeed contain some cholesterol, but there is no convincing evidence that eating eggs significantly increases your risk of heart disease. This is especially true when other sources of unclean animal protein (i.e., conventional beef and dairy) are kept to a minimum. Eggs that come from large factory farms have been shown to have lower levels of beneficial nutrients as well as higher levels of toxins ... not surprisingly, the healthiest eggs come from the healthiest chickens. If you keep other sources of animal derived protein to a minimum, you can safely enjoy about one egg per day.





## Dairy:

Technically, dairy refers to the milk from any mammal, although the vast majority of dairy in the modern diet comes from cows. For many people, dairy products find their way into virtually every meal. It's the milk in the morning cereal, the cream in the coffee, the butter on the bread and the cheese melted over the pasta or pizza for dinner. Considering that about 33% of Americans are lactose intolerant ... dairy at every meal is way too much.

The healthiest choice in the dairy case is organic plain yogurt. The “probiotic” organisms that helped to ferment the milk and turn it into yogurt are beneficial themselves and they yield a higher protein content and easier to digest product than milk itself.

Generally, you should work to decrease your consumption of cow's milk dairy products and get comfortable with plant-based alternatives. A small amount of organic milk and cheese are acceptable but your main dairy source should be organic, plain yogurt.





## Protein powders:

By now you've begun to realize that the majority of the food that you should be eating is minimally processed and as close as possible to its natural form. As such, it may surprise you to see store bought protein powders on our list of acceptable sources of clean, high-quality protein. Fast-paced lives and challenging work schedules can make it difficult to find high-quality clean protein at every meal. Using a protein powder in a smoothie or stirred into food can help to fill that void for many people. Protein powders made from hemp, whey, rice, egg or pea can provide a tasty and easy way to meet your daily protein needs.



## Carbohydrates:

It is hard to believe that a molecule that contains nothing but carbon(C), hydrogen(H), and oxygen(O) could inspire so much nutritional controversy. Carbohydrates are ring-shaped molecules that are widely distributed in plant foods like vegetables, fruits and grains. When these compounds are eaten, your digestive process will break them down into simple sugar molecules which serve as your body's primary fuel source. Depending on the arrangements of those C's, H's and O's, carbohydrates are called simple or complex. Simple carbs break down into sugar quickly and easily while complex carbs take more time to release their sugars into the bloodstream.



Whether it's a vegetable, fruit or grain ... the more complex the better. Complex carbohydrates from veggies, fruits and grains are allowed and encouraged.

You'll see on your food lists that the complex carbohydrate section is divided into three categories: vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Each category is discussed separately below:

## Vegetables:

When Hippocrates famously said "let thy food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food," he was undoubtedly referring to vegetables. You've heard it from your mother, from your doctor, and you've heard it from almost every nutrition or diet book ever published. And you're going to hear it again here ... That's right, "eat your vegetables." As a rich source of complex carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, vegetables are the ultimate health food. There are several common questions that arise when people are starting to add additional vegetables into their diet. The following FAQ's will help you guide your vegetable decision-making:





## Are organic vegetables better?

The short answer to this question is ... YES. It's true that organically grown produce tends to be more expensive and many people question whether the increased cost is justified. There is also an ongoing controversy about whether organic produce has more nutrients than those grown conventionally. I'd like to set the record straight ... Organic food is better for three reasons:



1. Organic food is better for you.
2. Organic growing is better for farmers.
3. Organic farms are better for the planet.

Fruits and vegetables grown in rich, fertile organic soil tend to have higher nutrient levels than their conventional counterparts. Perhaps more importantly, organically grown vegetables contain little to none of the toxic herbicides and pesticides found on (and in) conventionally grown varieties. More of what you want, less of what you don't. Although it is better to eat conventional vegetables than none at all, organic vegetables should be purchased whenever they are available and affordable.



The Environmental Working Group publishes an annual list of the “dirty dozen” which represents the most contaminated foods in the produce section ... these are the foods that you should buy organic whenever possible. They also list a group of the “clean 15” which represents foods that don’t tend to have large amounts of pesticide residue even when they are not grown organically. Here’s a link to the latest version of the list:

[https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/?gclid=CJS4\\_4eQls0CFdgXgQodsZkPww](https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/?gclid=CJS4_4eQls0CFdgXgQodsZkPww)



DIRTY DOZEN		
Fruits And Vegetables With Pesticide Residue Data		
1.		STRAWBERRIES
2.		APPLES
3.		NECTARINES
4.		PEACHES
5.		CELERY
6.		GRAPES
7.		CHERRIES
8.		SPINACH
9.		TOMATOES
10.		SWEET BELL PEPPERS
11.		CHERRY TOMATOES
12.		CUCUMBERS

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## Is it Okay to Eat Frozen or Canned Vegetables?

Remember the old Popeye cartoon? He was big and strong because he ate his spinach, right? And his spinach was in a can! Overcooked, over-salted and not exactly tasty. Gross. Well, these days, canning and freezing technology has improved immensely and canned/frozen vegetables are much better in terms of both taste and nutrition than they were years ago.





Fresh vegetables are always preferred but frozen or canned vegetables are perfectly acceptable. Our supermarkets are brimming year-round with fresh vegetables, many of which have travelled thousands of miles to get there. When you are shopping for vegetables, it makes sense to pay attention to where you live, the season of the year, and how far away from you that fresh vegetable was grown. When fresh produce is unavailable or expensive because it is out of season, canned or frozen vegetables are an excellent choice.

If you do choose canned vegetables, make sure that the can is not lined with Bisphenol-A (BPA). This is especially true for acidic foods like tomatoes and tomato sauces which should only be bought in glass or BPA-free cans. Also, take the time to look at the label of any canned vegetable to make sure that it does not contain additives, preservatives or extra salt.

## Does it Matter if My Produce is Locally Grown?

It makes financial, environmental and nutritional sense to eat locally grown produce. When you choose locally grown produce, you will also be “eating with the seasons”, which is a wonderful way to stay in touch with where your food comes from. Locally grown produce is always encouraged but not required.

## Are Some Vegetables Better Than Others?

In terms of their overall nutritional value and the research on health promotion and disease prevention, there is one family of vegetables that stands way ahead of the rest. And the winner is ... Brassica oleracea! Huh? Never heard of it? Brassica oleracea is the Latin name for a group of similar plants known as “cruciferous vegetables”



because their flowers resemble a cross. This group of all-stars includes broccoli, cabbage, kale, collard greens, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and bok choi. There is a staggering amount of medical research on the health benefits of cruciferous vegetables, including a large body of evidence about the role these plants play in human detoxification and cancer prevention. Anyone who is interested in generally improving their health should eat more cruciferous vegetables.

## What are “Nightshades”?

Nightshade is the common name used to describe the Solanacea family of plants. This is a diverse group of edible, medicinal and sometimes poisonous plants. Nightshade plants contain a group of chemicals called alkaloids that can be a problem for some people with joint pain, muscle aches and certain neurologic problems. The most common nightshades in the diet are:

- Tomato
- Eggplant
- Potato (not sweet potato)
- Peppers (including bell peppers, and hot peppers)

Some people with joint pain, headaches and other symptoms find that they feel better if they avoid nightshades. If you think that you might be reacting to nightshades, try eliminating them completely for at least 3 weeks and track whether your symptoms improve. If they do, consider reintroducing them for one day and pay close attention to whether or not your symptoms return.







## Is There a Best Way to Prepare my Vegetables for Maximum Benefit?

For the purposes of general health and nutrition, I am much more concerned that you actually eat the vegetables than I am about the way that they are prepared. If you can prepare them in a way that will make you more likely to eat them ... that's the best way. In my family, we eat vegetables at every meal ... either in a way that “highlights” them as a stand-alone dish or cooking them into a more involved recipe. My favored prep methods for stand-alone vegetables are:

- 1. Roasted:** Spread a single layer of vegetables on a cookie sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and a little salt and pepper. Put in a 400° F oven and toss every 10 minutes until they get browned and tender. Works for just about anything but especially great for Brussels sprouts, broccoli, beets, cauliflower, asparagus, onions, carrots, sweet potato, squash and any root vegetables. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice after cooking ...
- 2. Steamed:** Lightly steamed vegetables prepared with no added fats or oils are an excellent choice for broccoli, green beans, artichokes, carrots and cauliflower. Try cooking just until the vegetables turn a deep rich color, while there is still a little crunch left. A steamer pot with a glass lid can be your friend.
- 3. Sautéed:** Get your pan hot first, then add a bit of olive or coconut oil. This method works great for just about any single vegetable or vegetable medley ... toss in your onions, peppers, mushrooms, asparagus and zucchini, then let 'em sizzle. Take them off the heat well before they are limp.
- 4. Grilled:** If barbecues could talk ... mine would tell a very different story than most. Our family grill almost never cooks meat; fish and vegetables are what it knows best. Whether on a skewer, in a



basket, or straight on the grate ... grilled onions, corn, tomatoes, asparagus, peppers, mushrooms, eggplant, zucchini and squash. Lightly brushed with a little homemade marinade ... delicious!

- 5. Raw:** Some of the vitamins and phytochemicals that make vegetables so nutritious can be destroyed by heat. As such, it makes sense to eat some of your vegetables raw from time to time. When I'm preparing vegetables for a meal, I'll often cut off a few broccoli or cauliflower florets and just eat them raw while I'm cooking. Also try snacking on raw carrots, cabbage, celery, peppers, radishes and cucumbers.

## Fruit:

“Why not go out on a limb, that’s where the fruit is.” -Mark Twain

There was a time not long ago when a piece of fresh fruit was a rare and very special treat. Back then, fresh fruit really was nature’s candy, and nobody needed to be told to eat more it. With all the other sugar-laden candy that is available these days ... fruit doesn’t get anywhere near enough attention.

Fruits are loaded with a rainbow of healthy phytonutrients, vitamins and minerals. They make for sweet and delicious snacks and desserts. Fruit is healthy and is strongly encouraged.





There are several common questions that arise when people are thinking about adding additional fruit into the diet:

## Is the Sugar in Fruit Bad for Me?

You may have heard about the “glycemic index”, which is a scientifically valid scale that rates foods according to the rate that they raise your blood sugar. Foods with a higher glycemic index will raise blood sugar more rapidly than those with lower numbers. Because of the natural sugars found in fruits, many of them are fairly high on the glycemic index scale which causes lots of confusion for people who don’t know whether or not fruit should be included in the diet. Let’s set the record straight here ... you can and should eat fruit.

## Fresh or Frozen?

Generally speaking fresh fruits are ideal, but there are several advantages to freezing. For many recipes, frozen fruit performs perfectly well and is significantly less expensive. Frozen fruits are perfect for making a nice thick smoothie without adding extra ice. And of course, because they have a much longer shelf, frozen or canned foods can make summer fruits available all year long.

## What about dried fruit?

When a fruit is dried and the water is evaporated, what’s left is a concentrated version of the original. Although there is nothing unhealthy about the drying process itself, eating dried fruits does present two common problems:



1. The sugars in dried fruits are much more concentrated and it's easy to eat much more than you should. A good rule for dried fruits is that you should only eat as much dried fruit as you would have if that fruit were fresh. Think about those dried apricot slices. Each one (sometimes two) of those was a whole apricot. How many fresh whole apricots would you eat in one sitting?
2. Dried fruits often contain additives and preservatives to help maintain freshness, color, or texture. These chemical additives should be avoided entirely.

## Does my fruit need to be organic?

As discussed above about vegetables, it is always better to buy organic fruit when it is available and affordable. I would prefer you to buy frozen organic fruit over conventional fresh fruit. The Environmental Working Group produces an annual list of the “dirty dozen” and the “clean fifteen” which is a handy shopping guide with information about the most and least contaminated fruits.

## Sweeteners:

It wasn't very long ago when getting your hands on a sugar cube was a rare and special treat. About 300 years ago, the average person ate about 5 pounds of sugar per year. Today, the average person consumes nearly 200 pounds of sugar per year! There is a very old phrase in toxicology that says “the dose makes the poison” which expresses the idea that even a harmless substance can be a toxin ... it all depends on the dose. In the case of modern day sugar consumption, the dose is most definitely toxic.



In the quantities that are currently consumed by the average person, sugar is toxic ... plain and simple. It causes diabetes, and plays a major role in the development of heart disease and cancer. You should decrease your sugar consumption significantly. Naturally occurring sugars like honey and maple syrup are acceptable ... but you should be adding these in yourself rather than letting a food manufacturer add them for you.

Let's take a close look at vanilla yogurt for an example of how this can work for you. If you look at the label of a typical plain unflavored yogurt, you'll see that one cup contains about 9 grams of naturally occurring milk sugar. A store bought vanilla yogurt usually contains nearly 30 grams. Quick math quiz:  $30-9=$  ? You got it ... the manufacturer added 21 grams of sugar to the yogurt to give it that sweet vanilla flavor. Why not just add your own? If you buy the plain yogurt and add 1 teaspoon of your own real maple syrup and a few drops of vanilla extract ... your total sugar will be about 13-15 grams. Less than half of the store bought version!

## Natural or artificial sweeteners?



Humans love sweets. It's in our genes ... literally. Blood sugar (glucose) is our primary fuel, and a sweet taste on the tongue is a signal that blood sugar is about to rise. This deep love for sweet has led to some amazing advances in our ability to extract sugar from a wide variety of different sources. It's fairly easy to see how humans learned to get the sweet nectar



from sugar cane, maple trees and from honeybees ... but we've also figured out how to get sugar from beets, corn, rice, agave, coconut and more. Eating any of these natural sources of sugar will cause the predictable rise in blood sugar that anyone would expect after eating something sweet. Modern agriculture has allowed massive amounts of these refined sugars into the food supply and in the quantities currently consumed, regardless of its source ... it's a toxin. Added sugars, even the naturally derived varieties, need to be limited.

Modern technology has also allowed us to eat high-tech sweet tasting chemicals that have virtually no effect on blood sugar. Saccharin (the pink one), Aspartame (the blue one) and sucralose (the yellow one) are all examples of modern chemistry making its way into your food and drink. Although these chemical sweeteners don't directly raise blood sugar levels, they have been associated with increased rates of obesity, neurologic problems (like migraines) and a host of problems. These synthetic compounds are best avoided entirely.

The most recent addition to the rainbow of little sweet packets is the green one: Rebaudioside A or Reb-A which is an extract made from the leaves of the Stevia (sweetleaf) plant. This product is surprisingly sweet, and like the synthetic chemicals above, has minimal impact on blood sugar levels. It is still a highly processed product, and probably not something you want to consume in large quantities.

As your sugar consumption decreases, you will notice that your taste buds will begin to become more sensitive to sweet flavors. After several weeks, most people continue to prefer their treats a bit less sweet. Small amounts of honey and maple syrup are the only sweeteners that you should eat.



## Grains:

“Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain...” Those flowing fields of wheat have become a nutritional battleground. It’s hard to believe that the tiny seeds of these grass-like plants have caused so much controversy and confusion. There are a few simple facts that will help you understand how grains fit into a long-term health plan.

## What is the difference between a whole grain and a refined grain?

A whole grain is the entire seed of a grain plant, including all three parts of the seed:

1. **Bran:** The husk around the outside of the seed which contains fiber, B-vitamins and antioxidants.
2. **Germ:** The tiny kernel inside the husk that will eventually sprout into a new plant. It contains vitamins, minerals, protein and healthy fats.



3. **Endosperm:** The large starchy portion of the seed that will nourish the germ as it grows. It is largely composed of carbohydrates.

When a whole grain is refined, the bran and the germ are removed leaving only the starchy endosperm. Whole grains are healthier because they contain all of the naturally occurring nutrients in the seed. Some common examples of grain plants are: wheat, rice, barley, oats, buckwheat and quinoa.

## Is there a difference between refined and processed grains?

Absolutely! Refining grain involves the techniques described above whereby the bran and the germ are removed. Processing grain is what happens at a mill, where grains might be cracked, split or ground into flour. Processing is done on both whole and refined grains.

When you're shopping for breads, crackers and other processed grain products, it can be really tricky to figure out if a product contains whole or refined grains. In the case of wheat, when the whole seed is ground into flour and that flour (and only that flour) is used to make bread, the packaging will say 100% whole wheat. If the packaging doesn't say 100% whole wheat, you can assume that refined flour has been added to the mix. The Whole Grains Council ([www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org)) has developed a "100% Whole Grain" stamp that can now be found on many foods to help make it easier to identify 100% whole grain products.





For many people, a short trial of 3-4 weeks of complete elimination of wheat and all processed grains can be very eye-opening. That's right, nothing made with flour at all ... No bread, pasta, tortillas, crackers or baked goods for 3-4 weeks! This can be a great kickstart, because most people who eliminate wheat and grains will lose significant weight and feel better. After a complete elimination, you can bring back grains but you should only eat whole grains (like brown rice or quinoa) as well as products like bread, pasta and cereal made from 100% whole grains.

## What's all the fuss about gluten?

The reputation of this humble protein sure has taken a beating lately, and for good reason. Back in the 1960s, there was significant work done on developing a version of wheat that was much higher yield. This hybrid wheat plant is known as "dwarf wheat" and it is now the primary wheat variety that is used in the industrial world. (Some estimates suggest that dwarf wheat is as much as 99% of the wheat used in the market) Unfortunately, over time we have discovered that dwarf wheat is more difficult to digest than older, heirloom varieties. This may be due to differences in the concentration and structure of the gluten proteins in the grain.

Gluten is a family of proteins found in certain grains, with wheat, barley and rye being the three most common ones. It is what helps bread have a spongy, chewy texture. It can also make some people sick. In a condition called celiac disease, patients have an abnormal immune reaction to gluten that can cause a very serious illness. Total avoidance of dietary gluten is the only treatment for this condition. On top of this, it is estimated that six times as many people have a condition known as non-celiac gluten intolerance. Again, a gluten-free diet is the treatment for this condition.



Many people find that following a gluten-free diet delivers significant benefits to their health and vitality. The good news is that with the prevalence of these conditions, food product manufacturers, restaurants and bakeries catering to gluten-free diets are popping up everywhere.

Scientists still haven't figured out all of the exact reasons why gluten can be such a problem, but one thing is becoming increasingly clear: many people feel better on a gluten-free diet. There are many conditions and symptoms that respond well to a trial of a gluten free diet. Usually, three weeks of wheat and gluten elimination will make it clear whether you have an intolerance.

## Fats and Oils:

By now you're probably aware that fats and oils (lipids) in the diet are not the villains that everybody thought they were years ago. All of our cells are surrounded by a thin cell membrane that is made almost entirely of lipids that come from your diet. The health and the fluidity of these cell membranes are critical to the function of the machinery inside the cell itself. When a cell membrane is made of "good fats", the cell itself will work better than one with a membrane made of "bad fats."

Bad fats are found in large amounts in processed snack





foods, baked goods, deep fried foods and in factory farmed animals like poultry and cattle. Shortening, hydrogenated oils, trans fats and margarine are all sources of unhealthy fats which you should strictly avoid. If it says hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated ... stay away.

Good fats are the types found in cold water fish, nuts, seeds, olive oil, coconut and even in some animal foods like omega-3 eggs, or pasture-raised animals. Healthy fats are absolutely essential to optimum cellular functioning.

## Drinks:

Your choice of beverages plays an important role in your general health and making healthy drink choices helps you in two important ways:



1. On the positive side: Healthy beverages promote proper hydration and can be an excellent source of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients.
2. The downside: Poor drink choices will add calories, sugar and all sorts of chemical additives that can undermine your health and are a source of metabolic toxins.

Here is the background information about many different beverages and how they fit, or don't fit, into your diet.



- **Water:** It may surprise you that I am not going to encourage you to drink a specific amount of water each day. I will suggest that you should drink when you're thirsty ... and your first choice should be clean, filtered, room temperature water.
- **Tea:** Most people use the word "tea" to refer to any drink made by pouring boiling water over dried plant leaves or flowers. Technically, genuine tea is brewed using the leaves of a particular plant called *Camellia sinensis*. Depending on how the plant is harvested and processed, *Camellia* leaves can be made into green, black or white tea. Green tea is a superfood because it contains unique bioflavonoid compounds that have health promoting effects for virtually every body system. There are hundreds of other herbs that can be used for tea ... and all of the commonly available herbal teas are allowed and encouraged. There is a large selection of herbal blends made by Traditional Medicinals in my office waiting room. Other brands that I like include: Numi, Organic India and Rishi, which are available online and in most health food stores.
- **Fruit and Vegetable Juices:** Juices made from fresh fruits and vegetables can be an ally for general health and nutrition that you can include in your diet but with some caution. Juice provides a concentrated source of clean and easily digestible nutrients without the fiber portion of the fruit or vegetable it came from. Pure fruit juices are a concentrated source of fructose, so you should either combine sweet fruit juice with other ingredients in a smoothie or dilute it at least 1:1 with water. 1:3 is even better.
- **Smoothies:** These blended drinks are a wonderful and welcome addition and an excellent way to add fruits and vegetables into the diet. They are tasty and easy to prepare ... and they allow you to eat a super nutritious, health promoting meal on the go. Smoothies



can serve as a meal replacement for one meal per day. There are endless variations for smoothie recipes so you'll never get bored.

- **Coffee:** When my patients admit to drinking coffee, they often say it with a guilty grin. My response is, "I love coffee too ... and I'm not ashamed to admit it." Filtered black coffee is a rich source of antioxidants and for most people, the benefits of drinking coffee outweigh the risks. The reasons for avoiding coffee have more to do with overconsumption, additives and addiction rather than anything toxic about coffee itself. In fact, there are hundreds of scientific articles and studies that have shown that coffee consumption is associated with a wide range of health benefits.

Although coffee itself in reasonable amounts is fine ... we must remember that again, "the dose makes the poison." Many people drink too much of it, especially considering the added calories and the toxins in cream, sugar or artificial sweeteners. Furthermore, most coffee

drinkers are genuinely addicted to the caffeine. Keep your coffee consumption to 16 oz per day and stop drinking it altogether after 2pm.



Note: To learn more about the amazing history, culture and health benefits of coffee, order our new book at: <http://pages.thealternativedaily.com/thecoffeesolution>

- **Milk:** Humans are the only mammal that drink milk after infancy. All other mammals drink their mother's milk initially and then go on to eat "grown-up food" after that. Because of its high protein and calcium content, cow's milk has a longstanding reputation as a "health food." As research on the subject evolves, that reputation



has begun to change. Up to 75% of adults have some degree of lactose intolerance - and milk protein allergy is increasingly common. Many people feel better when milk and dairy products are eliminated from the diet.

- **Milk Alternatives:** If you're looking for a cool, refreshing and nutritious drink or a little something to add to your cereal or your coffee ... there are plenty of other choices besides cows milk. "Milk" that is made from coconut, almonds, rice and hemp are



readily available. Be sure to read labels on store bought products because some brands have added sugars and other additives. And remember to choose organic options. A favorite option is to make homemade almond milk. It's really simple and is less expensive and tastier than the store bought variety.



## Almond Milk Recipe:

- 1 cup raw almonds, soaked for 8-24 hours in water
  - 4 cups filtered water
  - 2-3 pitted dates (Medjools are the best)
  - 1 vanilla bean (or ½ tsp real vanilla extract)
  - 1/4 tsp cinnamon
  - Pinch of sea salt
1. Put almonds in a bowl and cover with water. Soak them overnight (anywhere between 2-24 hours will work, at least 8 hours is best).
  2. Rinse and drain after soaking.
  3. Place almonds into a blender with filtered water, dates and vanilla.
  4. Blend on high for about 1 minute.
  5. Strain using a fine mesh strainer or layered cheesecloth. (Straining is optional, some people like the pulp.)
  6. Add salt and cinnamon and a pinch of sea salt and mix.
  7. Store in a glass jar with a tight fitting lid.
  8. Almond milk will keep in the fridge for 3-5 days. Shake well before using.

Note: This recipe will work well with virtually any fresh, raw nuts or seeds. Try it with walnuts, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower or hemp seeds.

- Alcohol: One drink per day for women, two drinks per day for men.



- **Soda:** The only carbonated drink that you should drink is unsweetened, unflavored sparkling water. You can add a splash of fruit juice or a squeeze of lemon or lime to make a spritzer. Typical carbonated beverages and sodas contain massive amounts of sugar, high fructose corn syrup, caffeine, artificial sweeteners, flavors and colors. You should avoid these entirely. Soda has no place in your diet.

## Condiments:

There was a time when nutmeg was more valuable than gold. A pound of cinnamon represented a whole year's worth of pay. Imagine paying the rent with peppercorns! Once upon a time, the spice trade was the largest industry on Earth and herbs and spices were as highly prized as precious metals and jewels. And now those humble bottles you bought for \$1.99 have been sitting in the back of your pantry for years.

When people use the word “condiments,” most people are referring to ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, relish and maybe barbecue sauce. You should broaden your definition of condiments and start to learn to use herbs and spices to add both flavor and nutrition to your food.

These aromatic plants get their distinctive aromas and delicious flavors from aromatic compounds in the plants, and those aromatics are packed full of powerfully healthy phytochemicals. Clinical research continues to reveal all







of the ways that herbs and spices can be beneficial to your health ... and we can now begin to understand that these plants should still be considered a valuable treasure. The top 10 herbs and spices that you are encouraged to use liberally in your cooking are listed below:

- Turmeric
- Ginger
- Cilantro/Coriander
- Garlic
- Oregano
- Thyme
- Rosemary
- Cayenne pepper
- Mustard seed
- Cinnamon





## Label Reading:

Deciphering food labels can be terribly confusing. “All natural”. “An excellent source of calcium”. Sounds good, right? The claims on the front of food packages can make even the junkiest food sound nutritious. Food manufacturers are experts at fooling people who are trying to make healthy choices for themselves or their families. How can we tell if a packaged food is healthy or not? The best way is to ignore the front of the box, bottle or can and go straight to the ingredient list. All of the ingredients listed below should be off-limits.



- High fructose corn syrup
- Artificial colors (eg., [not a complete list]: FD&C Red #40, Yellow #5, Blue #1)
- Artificial flavors
- Partially Hydrogenated Oil (also known as trans fats)
- Artificial sweeteners (examples: saccharin, aspartame, sucralose, acesulfame potassium also known as acesulfame K)
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Sulfites and Nitrites: Used as a preservative in many packaged or processed foods like dried fruits, trail mixes, processed meats, alcoholic drinks and condiments.



You have now reached the end of the The Alternative Daily “Nutrient Rich Eating” food and nutrition guide. The information presented here has helped thousands of people understand more about the food they eat, and I hope it helps you too. Education is the first step on the road toward behavior change ... which is much more powerful than simply “going on a diet.”

There are several simple “food rules” listed below that you can use to help provide some initial structure. I also hope that you stay tuned in to us at The Alternative Daily because we have a steady stream of new information and products to help you get and stay well.



## Food Guide Summary:

- Eat within 60 minutes of waking up.
- Breakfast and lunch must include a portion of clean protein.
- Dinner may include protein but not required.
- All meals must contain a fruit or a vegetable.
- No seconds.
- Up to two healthy snacks per day if you are hungry. Nuts are the best choice.
- No food for at least 2 hours before bedtime.

Bon Appetit!

*Joshua Levitt*

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