

Nutrition and the quality of life

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Abstract

Healthy nutrition improves health related quality of life by preventing dietary, deficiencies, calorie deficiencies and promoting optimal functioning of body. The most important rules to build healthy nutrition on are good quality, natural plant based diet and active care of own wellbeing. The article also explains the differences between natural versus artificial food, plant food sources versus animal food sources, modern diets versus nutritional philosophies, simple sugars versus complex carbohydrates.

Nutrition and the quality of life

Good nutrition is in these days more important than ever. At least four of the ten leading causes of death in industrialized countries – heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes – are directly related to the way we eat and diet is also influencing the scores of other conditions. Each of us has possibility to choose the daily diet and so decide about own health. The wrong diet can be deadly; eating right is the basis for good health. Another health paradox associated with nutrition is that both under nutrition and over nutrition can have serious health consequences. The most common eating pattern in affluent Western countries is characterised by over consumption of calories, fats, especially the saturated ones, simple sugars and animal proteins. Moreover we are not consuming enough fiber, whole grains, and healthy omega 3 fats, some vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. Together with today's economic boom and higher standard of living we are changing our diets from bean products to milk and dairy products; from fresh vegetables to heavily salted and fatty potato chips; from fresh fruits to cereal bars; from wholegrain breads to baguettes; and from tea to coffee. At the same time the consumption of alcohol and tobacco products is on the rise. Many of us, even adolescent children, are regularly on some kind of extreme diets.

The habit of eating more calories than needed from artificially concentrated foods is the leading cause of obesity. Overweight is not only a cosmetic problem but also indirectly raises blood pressure, blood sugar and predisposes to arthritis and many other health problems.

Of course, food is not the only factor deciding about our health. Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle, which also includes regular physical activity, healthy sleeping pattern, not smoking or drinking alcohol excessively, stress management and limiting exposure to all environmental hazards. Still there are our genes playing significant part in our risk of certain health problems. Purely from practical point of view, it has no sense to

complain about our genes; much better is to concentrate on possibilities we have to influence our life. We have to focus on factors we can manage as the food we eat, the water we drink, the physical activity we take part in or to our attitude to daily situations.

Suggested changes

1. Movement: from quantity to quality

Overeating is the most common and dangerous dietary habit in industrialized countries today. The Western world definitely has less deficiency disease than parts of the developing world, but we also have a far greater incidence of chronic and degenerative diseases, such as arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. All of these problems have dietary correlations (Haas, 2004, p. 63). Chronic diseases are now the major cause of death and disability. According to WHO (World Health Organization) up to 80% of cases of coronary heart disease, 90% of type 2 diabetes cases, and one-third of cancers can be avoided by changing to a healthier diet, increasing physical activity and stopping smoking (facts related to chronic diseases, 2005). About every fourth person on Earth is too fat. Obesity is fast becoming one of the world's leading reasons why people die ("Globesity" gains ground as leading killer, 2004).

During my work with clients I did not meet any person overeating for example on carrots, walnuts, lentils or millet. The obesity and the need to count calories rose up with the widespread of unnatural, artificial concentrated, processed foods. Nearly all weight problems are resolvable through the adaptation of a diet derived from fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds. When on the diet of natural foods, it is not necessary to eat less than desired in order to stay slim. This means practically the dominance of the food quality above the food quantity. According to Douglas & Goldhamer (2003) the average overweight person eating to full satiation on whole natural foods will lose between 2.5 to 5 kg per month. And then they will keep it off, as long as they consume a diet of whole, natural foods (p.82).

Artificial versus natural food

Let's think about the purposes of some artificial food additives. The colors are purely cosmetic, which can only relate to the food's visual desirability, while flavors and flavor enhancers are for palatability, implying that the food itself, does not taste that great without them. Quite sure lots of these additives are used purely for better marketing, not for nutritional purposes. Flour is refined for longer shelf life, but not for our better life. It can be then transported much farther, even without refrigeration. Add a few preservatives and the stuff will look good for ages.

Similarly like by unwanted residues from pesticides used in conventional agriculture, our bodies are not designed for the assimilation of artificial additives. The problem is that it always takes too long for us to actually see the damage and make the association with the real cause. I strongly believe than natural food is almost exclusively superior to artificial one.

Organic food

Organic, whole foods have been the base of the human diet through the ages. Only in the twentieth century did we begin to be subjected to countless man-made chemicals in food and in the environment. As a result of such increased toxicity around us today, besides the healthy eating with right balance of nutrients we need also to avoid harmful substances and protect ourselves against those that cannot be avoided.

It is true that if we will be searching the information about organic food we can get off result with mixed or not too clear opinions. On the other hand, if we put in search engine some from the words as pesticides, organochlorides and antibiotics or growth hormones in poultry, we will find in relation with health only the description of potential risks.

You may be wondering why the governments allow pesticides in foods if they are so harmful. The argument given is that at very low levels they are not harmful to humans, yet the test to establish the safety levels are done only on individual pesticides. No one has tested or can test the infinite number of combinations of pesticides (and for sure not in combination with all the unnatural food additives) we are regularly exposed to (Holford, 2004, p. 34). Usual meal made from conventional food sources can be a cocktail of chemical residues, the combine toxicity of which is almost completely unknown. Organic agriculture is offering chemically free, fresh or minimal process food.

2. Choice: less animal and more plant food sources

Degenerative diseases such as, cardiovascular problems, diabetes and obesity are generally associated with high levels of blood cholesterol and urea nitrogen (protein left-over in the body). Both of these factors increase as people eat more meat, dairy products and eggs. Established scientific evidence suggests that there are major health benefits in eating more fruit and vegetables, as well as nuts and whole grains, moving from saturated animal fats to unsaturated vegetable oil-based fats and cutting the amount of fatty, salty and sugary foods in the diet.

On one side almost every respected health organization in the world is promoting plant-based, high-carbohydrate diets but on the other side the popular books are filled with recommendation to cut on carbs and pill up on animal proteins. Why such confusion? Perhaps, it is simply that the authors are selling, with the support of powerful meat and dairy industries, something that people want, a license to eat more meat and animal foods general. If the claims in such a book had any basis in fact, the people in the world who eat the most carbohydrate would have the greatest rates of insulin resistance, obesity and chronic disease. In fact, epidemiological evidence clearly demonstrates that the exact opposite is true. Low carbohydrate diets tend to maximize the dietary components most strongly linked to chronic disease, as saturated fat, cholesterol and animal protein and minimized the dietary components that have been found to be the most highly protective, as fiber, phytochemicals, antioxidant nutrients, plain protein and unsaturated fats.

What about the older claim that plant protein are not complete? In fact, the amino acids in all animal protein are derived from plants, whether they originated from a cow that ate beans and grains, or from fish that ate a smaller fish that ate seaweed.

The biggest a 20-year epidemiological study called The China-Cornell-Oxford-Project that looked at the eating habits and diseases of thousands people in 65 Chinese rural provinces, demonstrates that a shift from an animal-based to a plant-based diet can have enormous health benefits and can also reduce health care expenses. This unique study

examined relationships between health and diet in a holistic way. (By contrast, most contemporary studies focus on relationships between a single nutrient or food and a single disease). China was chosen because most of its residents lived in the same region all of their lives and consumed the same diet, which was unique to their region.

When comparing the diet of people in rural China to the average American's diet, it was demonstrated that the Chinese diet was much lower in total fat and protein; foods from animal products were substantially lower. Average protein intake was only 65 percent compared to the U.S. and the Chinese diet contained only about 0-20 % animal-based foods while the average American diet contained about 60-80 % animal-based foods. Comparatively, the Chinese diet is much higher in dietary fiber and 30 % higher in total calorie intake. The authors of this study concluded: "The major comprehensive dietary factor responsible for diseases of pre-industrialized societies and those of post-industrialized societies is the decision to consume much larger quantities of animal-based foods. The Chinese diet based more on plant-based foods such as grains, vegetables, legumes and soy products is far healthier than the standard American diet".

Probably one of the most significant findings is the correlation of animal protein with high blood cholesterol (both total and LDL-cholesterol) and the correlation of plant protein with lower blood cholesterol. Prior to this study it was usually given that there was only a relation between high animal fat intake and a high level of cholesterol. There is also a significant difference in the blood cholesterol level between the Chinese and Americans. The Chinese have an average cholesterol level ranging between 70 mg and 170 mg while American's average over 200 mg. Interestingly, the highest rate of heart diseases and cancers in China came from regions where they ate the most animal products (China-Cornell-Oxford project, 2001).

3. Approach: activity instead of passivity

"Hunger causes urgency and urgency demands short-term solutions that compromise long-term values. Plan for success, and you will succeed more often" (Douglas & Goldhamer, 2003, p. 16).

The first principle of wellness is paying attention to what our body is trying to tell us. The active listening to our body enables us to make immediate healthy choices in our lifestyle, to solve most of the potentially healthy problems before they even start. With this preventive approach we can successfully reduce if not eliminate the use of drugs and/or unnecessary medical interventions.

The approach of activity instead of passivity can be used in many of daily tasks: like regular active preparation of healthy snacks for the unexpected situations instead of buying snack in the first fast food store or preparation of eating and exercise plan for the following week. To take active care of own wellbeing is in my view a must and this is especially necessary in the former East block countries where we were for decades taught to be passive and just blindly follow the authorities, including the doctors. I wish that in the future the natural healthcare and basic prevention will be an important part of every school's curriculum.

Practical examples of diets, nutrients and supportive factors

1. Modern diets and traditional nutritional philosophies

There is a difference between natural eating patterns based on philosophies and the modern, very oft unbalanced or extreme diets. Most oft today's diets are aimed just to reduce the weight without global thinking about the general influence on the body health, in contrast to the holistic approach of nutritional philosophies.

Modern diets

We have diets such as those based on having more pasta (polysaccharides) or meat (proteins) or separating polysaccharides from proteins or eating/restricting certain foods at certain times of the day. However, these diets are concentrating almost solely on reducing calories intake and not on eating the right nutrition. Research has demonstrated that during the past ten years, there was a rising trend among health conscious people first to eat low fat diets than to prefer low "carbs" diets or reduce their calorie intake, which is often done by paying the price of eating only the "improved" light variants of our favorite products. In spite of this, there remains an increase in obesity with all the connected health risks in the West. The results show, that most of us are repeatedly on the diet, that we are eating less fat and less calories but at the same time the population is still getting fatter.

Traditional nutritional philosophies

What can be learned from nutritional recommendations based on the rules of ancient philosophies? For example, vegetarians recommend the partial or total elimination of animal products from their diet and therefore their nutrition is plant-based. Macrobiotic philosophy, which originated in Japan, is based on balancing yin and yang energies and getting nutrition from grains, vegetables, lentils, nuts, seeds and small amounts of fruits while at the same time eliminating milk products, meat, eggs and sweets. Ayurveda with its origin in India recommends eating on the basis of "Doshas characters" which is a kind of human typology and the resulting diet is again more plant-based than the typical Western diet although there is no clear recommendation to eliminate meat products. Five elements nutrition from China describes in details the subtle food energies regarding to their taste, colors, and belongings to the body organs or the year seasons. This nutrition recommends eating in the harmony with our body and the nature. All the shortly described traditional nutritional philosophies emphasize complex natural nutrition with preference of natural foods, low in environmental toxins and based on plant food sources. All of them also emphasize holistic approach to health like preference of organic products, avoidance of common drugs or the advantages of physical activity.

2. Some of nutritional groups and how they affect human body

Carbohydrates and fiber

The human body is designed to run on carbohydrates. They are the ideal fuel for our organisms and even the best source of energy for endurance athletics, because they provide an immediate as well as a time released energy source as they are easily digested and then consistently metabolized into the bloodstream.

The idea that carbohydrates should be the primary energy source is not the only one among the ways that nutritionists think about them nowadays. In fact, it may no longer even be the most important one. Two discoveries about carbohydrates have changed nutritional thinking about their role in health. It has been the discovery that many carbohydrates are not

easily digested and that some of carbohydrates function in the body as communication devices. The indigestible “resistance starches” (fiber) and oligosaccharides resist breakdown in the small intestine, they are making their way through the small intestine and end up as food for bacteria in the large intestine. These carbohydrate groups do not provide fuel for the body so much as they significantly stabilize the digestive system. Another important function of some carbohydrates emerges from their ability to influence the communication between the cells. On this way the oligosaccharides branch of carbohydrate group plays a critical role in immune function, and many carbohydrate structures turn out to be antitumor associated. For example, mushrooms that have been part of Chinese and Japanese diets have been shown to contain carbohydrates that improve communication between immune cells and make immunotherapy for conditions like cancer more effective (Haas, 2006, p. 29).

The two basic carbohydrate categories are complex carbohydrates, including starch and fiber, and simple carbohydrates. Starches make up a largest part of the world’s food supply, mostly in the form of grains. Simple carbohydrates are naturally occurring sugars in fresh fruits and some vegetables and in milk and dairy products and added sugars in concentrated form, as in the sugar, honey, or corn syrup.

The problem arises when the carbohydrates in the diet are mainly presented by so called simple sugars. This means carbohydrates which are easily and quickly digested and used by the body. In contrast the polysaccharides, second large group of carbohydrates, typically contain several hundred molecules of sugars and these must undergo substantial enzyme digestion before they can be absorbed and used by the body. The significant difference between these two groups of carbohydrates is their influence on blood sugar which is measured and expressed with the help of glycemic index. Glycemic index is the effect of food on a person’s blood glucose and insulin response. Glycemic index ranks foods on the base of the extent to which the foods raise the blood glucose level as compared with pure glucose. Pure sugar products produce the greatest rise in the blood glucose level and the legumes produce generally the most even glucose level response. Keeping the blood sugar balanced is probably the most important factor in maintaining balanced energy levels and weight.

In order to prevent unneeded peak of blood glucose we can also use the method of right foods combination. Balanced meal that contains foods with some carbohydrates, protein and fat will be relieving glucose much slower than pure carbohydrate meal. The carbohydrates in the meal provide a quick source of glucose. The protein in the meal stimulates glucagon secretion, which opposes insulin and prevents it from storing glucose too quickly. The soluble fibers and fat in the meal slow down digestion so that a steady stream of glucose is received rather than a sudden flood. By these standards the good choice is for example a bowl of whole oats with natural yoghurt and fresh fruits (Boyle, 2004, p. 90). From individual foods especially recommended are such as legumes and oats, high in soluble fiber. This fiber turns into a gel in the digestive tract, stretching the time required for the absorption of sugars in foods and preventing dangerous post-meals blood sugar surges.

In the case of excess consumption of carbohydrates these are after converting to fatty acids and then triglycerides stored as a body fat. Obesity is associated most frequently with simple carbohydrate overindulgence.

Fiber is natural constituent of a healthy diet high in fruit, vegetables, lentils, beans and whole grains. Fiber decreases the time that food waste spends inside the body and reduces the risk of infection or cell changes due to carcinogens that are produced when some foods,

particularly meat, degrade. By the way, this point is also explaining why natural combination of meat and high fiber foods, like grains and vegetables are better than separation between protein and carbohydrate sources on the plate. Soluble fiber is acting in bloodstream where they help keep blood sugar levels balanced and on this way also control appetite and play important part in management of healthy weight.

Fiber is exclusively found only in plant foods. Whenever we increase our intake of plants in comparison to animal foods, we are increasing our fiber intake as well as intake of phytochemicals, the protective factors also found only in plants. Countries with the least food processing and the least animal food intake have the greatest consumption of dietary fiber.

Choose the best quality from carbohydrates and fiber: move from simple high glycemic sugars to natural, complex, low glycemic index foods as legumes, oats, whole grains, vegetables and nuts.

Proteins

Protein is a primary component of every cell. It provides building materials in form of amino acids for grow and repair of body tissues. Proteins are also building substances for all the enzymes and antibodies. Some proteins act as chemical messengers by regulating body processes. Proteins help regulate the quantity of fluids in body compartments, they act as buffers to maintain the normal acid-alkaline balance and some of them specialized in moving nutrients and other substances into and out of cells and around the body. Protein is also special in the sense that it contains nitrogen, is made up of very complex molecules, and gives organisms their biological identity. From the general nutritional view, however, protein is neither more nor less special than lipids or carbohydrates. Our body needs all three of these macronutrients in proper balance. In fact, protein needs are much lower than most people imagine and the risk of protein deficiency for most of us is negligible. In our societies only the people experimenting with very restrictive diets as for example some fruitarians or alcoholics are likely to become protein deficient (Weil, 2001, p. 104). Oppositely there is definitive concern that the industrialized countries are over consuming protein, especially from meat and dairy foods (Haas, 2006, p. 62).

Proportions between carbohydrates, lipids and protein recommended by most nutritionists are: 50 to 60% calories from carbohydrates, preferable from unrefined, low glycemic foods, 30% calories from fat and 10 to 20% calories from protein. That represents about 50 to 100 grams of protein daily on the average 2000 calorie diet (0.8 g per kg of body weight). World Health Organization is even more conservative about the protein needs and recommends the 0.45 grams of protein per kilogram of ideal body weight, which is at about half of the U.S. government minimum levels.

Protein rich foods are usually expensive and of no advantage over carbohydrates when used to provide fuel for the body as recommended by some advocates of low carbohydrate diets. Just oppositely the higher intake of protein means also the higher production of waste products resulting from metabolism of proteins. High protein diets therefore increase workload on the liver and kidneys. Research studies also suggest the possibility that high protein diets may irritate the immune system, keeping it off-balance and making it more likely to react against harmless substances in the environment (allergy) or to attack body's own tissues (autoimmunity) (Weil, 2001, p. 107).

Regarding the question animal or plant protein there is clear answer: plant protein is the source of all essential amino acids and there exist no danger of any amino acids deficiency as a result of right practice plant based diet, as can we see through the history of millions vegetarians as well as from results of recent medical studies clearly demonstrating health benefits of vegetarian diets.

The quality of protein foods is not given only by the protein content but depends on other nutritional constituencies of given food. For example a lamb chop provides 25% of total calories as protein and 75% as fat, much of which is saturated fat. Half the calories in soybeans come from protein but even more important their real advantage is the rest of the calories come from desirable complex carbohydrates without any saturated fat.

Choose the best quality from proteins: substitute concentrated animal protein, which usually goes with saturated fats, for plant proteins in foods rich also in protective phytochemicals and fiber. If you consume animal proteins then prefer healthier sources like fishes and youghurts.

Fats

Eating the right type of fat is absolutely vital for optimal health. Fat alone is not the problem like some of the propagators of low fat diets are trying to suggest. The problem is the kinds of fat that have become dominant in our diets. Fats provide a concentrated source of energy and serve as an energy reserve. They form the major components of cell membranes, nourish skin and hair, insulate the body from extremes of temperatures and protect the vital organs.

Many problems are associated with excessive intake of fat, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and some forms of cancer. For many years, nutritionists have spoken about saturated fat, unsaturated fat, and polyunsaturated fat, but these three categories are a small part of the overall picture when it comes to fat quality. Today's recommendation regarding to fats are to focus on the intake of minimally processed plant fats and the right balance between omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids. The fats to reduce are saturated fats, trans fats and by higher temperature damaged polyunsaturated fats.

Researchers now theorize that LDL-cholesterol is damaging to the artery walls once it has been oxidized (Boyle, 2004, p. 110). Therefore the attention is newly put to reduce cardiovascular diseases, with focus on both contributory factors in the diet: reduction of saturated fat and the increase intake of protective factors, such as antioxidant vitamins. Protective antioxidants as betakarotene, vitamin C and E and the mineral selenium block the potentially damaging free radicals and by this way strengthen body's natural defenses against cell damage.

Polyunsaturated oils change their nature when refining and processing. To turn vegetable oil into hard fat, the oil goes through a process called hydrogenation. Although the fat is still technically polyunsaturated, the body cannot made use of it. Beside the whole line of negative influences in organisms, the so called trans fats also block the body's ability to use healthy polyunsaturated fats. Most margarines and manufactured foods contain these hydrogenated fats and are best avoided. The reason they are made is to increase shelve life of foods, but for sure not our life. Frying the fats also damages otherwise healthy oil, it causes the oxidation and the generation of harmful free radicals.

Very low fat diets increase cardiovascular risk due to excess consumption of carbohydrates. In general, fat and carbohydrate substitute for each other in the diet, lower one and the other increases (Weil, 2001, p. 99).

Choose the best quality from lipids: eliminate trans fats from the diet; reduce the total amount of fats and saturated fats, increase the natural oils, especially omega 3 fatty acids, and the intake of foods rich in natural oils as nuts and seeds.

Water

Water is by far the nutrient most needed by the body. Water is primary component of all the body fluids and also involved in almost every body function. Up to that water has ability to heal. When toxic substances from the environment make their way inside our bodies, our urine and our sweat usually carries the toxins back out. Toxic substances found in municipal drinking water have been indirectly linked to many chronic, degenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's, asthma, most forms of cancer, infertility, Parkinson's, and rheumatoid arthritis. We need to drink water that contains as few toxins as possible. Because of our current pollution problems, however, it may be essential for all of us to purify our drinking water.

When water passes through limestone, it picks up calcium. When it passes through dolomite it picks up magnesium. In fact increases in water magnesium as small as 6 mg per liter may be able to reduce deaths from ischemic heart disease by 10%. A bottle of highly mineralized spring water can contain well over 75% of the recommended daily allowance for magnesium. By comparison, tap water in most U.S. cities contains fewer than 3% of the RDA (Haas, 2006, p. 16).

Choose the best quality from water: Choose predominantly well water or spring waters and use some effective home filters for the rest of you dietary water needs.

An Overview of Suggested Dietary Changes

	Current situation: overeating		Way to go: preferences in the menu
Carbohydrates	Simple carbohydrates, high glycemic index foods	➔	Complex, low glycemic index carbohydrates with fiber
Proteins	Animal proteins	➔	Vegetable protein with lower environmental exposure
Fats	Total fats, saturated and trans fats, cholesterol	➔	Omega-3 fatty acids, natural oils
General	Calories, animal based food, processed food, concentrated food	➔	Natural plant based diet rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, phytochemicals, organic food

3. The factors supporting general wellbeing

Of course, food is not the only factor deciding about our health. Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle. Following are just some of ways we have to support our wellbeing.

Physical activity

The people may begin a fitness program to trim fat or to add muscle, but soon they are pleasantly surprised to find out that they have more energy, feel less tense, sleep better, and feel healthier, and so they keep it up. Through regular exercise, we can gain energy and confidences, increase our lean body tissue, reduce our body fatness, and improve the health of the skin and the muscle tone. Regular exercise improves the sleeping habits, reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers, reduces blood cholesterol levels and blood pressure, builds strong bones, enhances our immunity, and makes our lives more enjoyable, perhaps even longer. In order to stick with our exercise plan it is important to choose the activity we will enjoy and set up realistic goals.

Healthy sleeping pattern

Sleep is necessary and vital biological function. It is essential to a person's physical and emotional well being. In the dark our bodies begin to produce a melatonin, a key hormone in sleep-onset neurochemistry. The presence of light hinders melatonin production and results in the production of alerting neurochemistry. We are designed by nature to sleep while it is dark, about nine to ten hours each night. The comforting glow of today's inexpensive light encourages us to stay awake. Often tired the next morning, most of us use stimulants to medicate unpleasant fatigue. More than 90% of western adults are habitual users of caffeine, a powerful stimulant that temporarily camouflages sleep deficiency. Thought fatigue is the

number one complaint heard by primary care physicians; few recognized that sleep deprivation is the most common cause. Studies have shown that without enough sleep, a person's ability to perform even simple tasks declines dramatically. The price of chronic sleep deficiency includes impaired cognitive function, resulting in lost work productivity and increased accident rates. Even a minor sleep debt causes measurable compromise to immune function, making us more susceptible to infectious disease (Douglas & Goldhamer, 2003, p.143).

Stress management

Stress, in medical terms, means a disruption of homeostasis (balance) through physical or psychological stimuli. Today's news brings us round-the-clock coverage of natural and man-made disasters. We are attacked by information about floods and earthquakes, wars and terrorist attacks. Just few minutes of watching the news can make our stress level soar. The long term activation of the stress response system and the following overexposure to whole cascade of stress hormones can disrupt almost all body's processes; increase the risk of obesity, digestive problems, heart disease or insomnia. Chronic stress suppresses immune system and makes us more susceptible to infections.

Stressful events are a fact of life, but each of us can take steps to regulate the amount of stressors as well as to manage the impact these events have on us. To reduce our stress level we have two ways either the prevention via reduction of stressing factors (for example lower the exposure of TV news) or we can learn how to react to stress when we face events we can't control. The strategies to learn how to cope with stress can include exercise, relaxation techniques or the consultations with professional.

Positive thinking

Thoughts, as the food we eat or the activity we do, are exactly in our control and they can be very powerful. Positive thoughts can motivate healthy behavior, such as eating right and being active. Just making a plan to eat healthy and writing down our goals can increase our change to stick with the plan. Health benefits of positive thinking range from decreased stress to greater resistance to catching the common cold.

Limiting exposure to all environmental hazards

The environment plays a significant role in human development and health. Some links between environmental exposures and disease, such as lead and impaired cognitive development in children, are already well documented. But there exist thousands of potential toxic elements around us which influence on health was never established in the way they are attacking our body, which means in cocktails of mixed substances from food, clothes, detergents, air, water, drugs.

Today there is almost impossible to avoid all the harmful substances, as there is no place on our planet which is not contaminated in some way as a result of the by-products of our modern chemical life. Choosing organic foods and organic products whenever possible is the nearest we can get to minimize our exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

Conclusion

Healthy lifestyle is a foundation of life quality

The food you choose, the drugs you use, and the lifestyle choices you make are going to play the most important role in the determining the length and even more the quality of your life. By implementing the knowledge about healthy lifestyle into daily life, you will gain control of your health and happiness.

Today most nutritionists and international health organizations tend to favor a return to a more whole-food, plant based diet. As for example describes the recommendation number one from the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund (Fourteen recommendations to prevent cancer, 2004): “Choose predominantly plant-based diets rich in variety of vegetables and fruits, pulses and minimally processed starchy stable foods.” The more a food resembles the original, farm-grown product, the more nutritious it is likely to be. My general recommendation is to eat a predominantly natural diet containing fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and beans, with only moderate amounts of the more concentrated proteins such as milk products, eggs and animal meats if wished. Usually the more you will choose from organic and/or local grown products the better. Even further step can be eating in coordination with year seasons. This practically means for example the consumption of warming grain meals in winter and more light vegetable meals in summer.

Until now I described general dietary recommendations for healthy individuals, but the possibilities of right nutrition go far ahead. I’m sure that proper practiced individual nutrition based on modern knowledge about food biochemistry as well as awareness about subtle food energies should be the first choice medicine in the treating most of today’s chronic degenerative diseases in long term view. Such a method of treatment is natural, cheap, without side effects (nobody will be hurt by healthy nutrition) and the most important it attacks the real cause of the problem instead of suppressing the symptoms. For example the knowledge about metabolisms of homocysteine gives us the possibility to prevent many serious degenerative diseases by simple substitution with B vitamins. The knowledge about yin and yang energies or five elements nutrition enables us to eat the foods based on individual constitution and on this way to prevent the energy imbalances of the body, which are from eastern teachings the real causes of illnesses.

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