

# **What Should I Eat?**

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Diet and nutrition are important health concerns for everyone. There are many different, often conflicting, diets from which to choose. Our patients, especially those with chronic illnesses or weight problems, need help deciding what is healthy for them to eat. I often find it hard to answer this question for my patients or even for myself, so I attended Paul Pitchford's class on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> in the hope of finding more answers. As you would expect from the author of a 750 page book (Healing with Whole Foods, by Paul Pitchford. North Atlantic Books), Paul had much to say, and offered many options based on the patient's constitution, differential diagnosis, chronic illnesses, and personal preferences.

One of the great things about taking a nutrition class from Paul is that he uses Asian medicine terms to explain nutrition ideas. What foods help the Spleen energy? What foods can move stagnant Liver Qi? I don't know of anyone else who can give you that rare blend of East and West. Paul uses concepts from both Asian medicine and Ayurvedic medicine. He said that he prefers to speak more of Asian medicine in the upper Midwest because our climate more closely resembles that of northern China than that of India, where Ayurveda originated. So he uses a blend of Chinese and Ayurvedic.

One caveat I would like to point out is that Paul has a moral inclination against eating meat. Although he is not opposed to animal products, and says that most people need some animal protein, he also says that eating meat is bad for enlightenment. This is a message that pervades his presentation. If you believe that eating meat is immoral, you will love his message. If you believe that eating animals who have been raised in humane conditions is a moral part of life, you may need to sort out the morality from the nutrition in his message.

## **Foundational Healing**

Paul's talk was full of very interesting ideas. One was the idea of Foundational Healing. So many people try to lose weight or improve their diet, but end up failing over and over again. There has to be something that will make them more successful. His answer is Foundational Healing, which includes three branches: Awareness Practice, Activity, and Nutrition.

### Branch 1: Awareness practice

Diet is one of the most basic aspects of our lives. However, before trying to make changes to our diet, it is a good idea to build a mindfulness practice to slow down the mind. The spirit burns brighter in a slow mind and spirit guides our choices. If we can

quiet our minds we can be more open to change. When the mind and spirit are open and calm, people can go on to better diets; they will like it. One goal is to attain the middle path, where yin and yang merge and there is harmony and healing. Though the middle path may seem a bit boring to some of us, it is gratifying over time, and leads to enlightenment and bliss. The emptiness is filled with light and shen, and we obtain the courage to do what we need to do. The result is compassion and purification, which is obtained through doing the right things over time. Awareness practices, such as meditation, give us a bright and clear spirit. Acupuncture also helps to calm the mind and bring relaxation and a meditative state.

### Branch 2: Mindful movement

Mindful movement includes yoga, Tai Qi, Qi Gong, and walking. It is more fundamental to health than diet. You should begin gradually, start with two minutes, or even just imagine doing the exercises if you are too weak to start. We need to move energy to assimilate food and help the Spleen. Movement helps the liver and moves the ligaments. You can walk off depression, obesity, arthritis, cancer, heart disease and diabetes. People in the U.S. are very damp, very stagnant, and movement can help to free course stagnation.

### Branch 3: Diet

Good nutrition is based on organic, regional, freshly prepared, unrefined whole foods. The idea of Sattva comes from Ayurvedic medicine, and means the psychological state of being in equilibrium and balance. Sattva nutrition is mainly vegetarian, or plant based. Most people need some animal protein, but meat should be of high quality, either from the wild or organic and grass fed. Many studies show that too much meat is acid forming in the body, and can cause many health problems. The Standard American Diet (or SAD) today includes about two thirds meat products and one third plant. A better ratio would be one third meat and two thirds plant.

There were many diets to choose from in Paul's talk. He talked about the Rural Asian Diet and the Mediterranean Diet, which were similar and both showed definite health advantages over the U.S. diet. Together their main attributes are:

- Organic whole grains, veggies, beans and legumes, nuts, seeds, olives, fruits, sea veggies.
- Fresh fruit for dessert.
- Goat/sheep full-fat cheese and yogurt.
- Moderate amounts of whole fish, poultry, and eggs.
- Red meat just once or a few times a month. All high quality meat, grass fed, and 100% organic.
- Food is local, organic.
- Fermented foods: sauerkraut, pickles, and wine. Live fermented foods are rich in pro-biotics. Soy products such as miso, soy sauce, natto, tempeh, tofu.

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### **Glyconutrients, also known as Polysaccharides**

An important reason to keep plenty of healthy, whole food, complex carbohydrates in your diet is because they provide glyconutrients. These complex sugar compounds coat and protect all body cells against viruses and germs, and have anti-inflammatory effects. They coat the brain neurons for neurotransmitter function. The sources for these nutrients include whole grains, beans, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, seed, nuts, algae, herbs, and animal cartilage. Of course, these are the same foods found in the world's healthiest diets. One of the concerns about low carb diets is that these glyconutrients will not be plentiful enough to provide these benefits.

### **Vegan Diet**

The vegan diet is not recommended. It may be helpful for some excess individuals for 6 weeks or maybe up to six months. Beyond that it is detrimental to most patients. The raw vegan diet is the most dangerous long-term diet. In the short term, however, it is excellent for cleansing.

### **Regenerative Health Plan**

The Regenerative Health Plan is a therapeutic diet designed to reverse severe health problems. It can help to overcome infections, eliminate parasites, including candidiasis. It can help remove toxins, heavy metals, and chemicals from the body, and help to banish degenerative, chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis, and cancer. It is good for Liver Qi Stagnation, Damp, and Deficient Yin. This is a fairly restrictive diet and can be used as a template that can be adapted to a patient's particular constitution. For example, a patient with severe candida should follow this plan very strictly. A patient with less severe symptoms would be able to add in some of the foods from the list of items to avoid.

### Practice Foundational Healing for Regeneration

Enrich yourself with meditation or other awareness practice to calm your mind and build a strong spirit. Use mindful movement and exercise to move stagnation and burn up damp and excess conditions.

### Recommended foods

- Lots of vegetables (except sweet potato), especially green, leafy vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, kale and collards.
- Ample protein from well cooked legumes, tempeh, bean sprouts, peas, or lentils.
- Animal protein as needed from wild fish, cage-free poultry, or organic, grass-fed beef or buffalo.
- Yeast free breads and grains, about 20% of the diet.
- If there is phlegm, eat radishes and mushrooms.

- Green stevia powder or green liquid extract for sweetener.
- Nuts and Seeds: use flax seeds, almonds, roasted pumpkin seeds
- Chew six chlorella tablets at least twice a day, or anytime to curb sugar cravings.
- Live Ferments, such as sauerkraut and pickles
- Garlic, minced finely and sprinkled on food.
- Add seaweeds to other dishes, such as kombu in legume dishes.
- Fruit: Enjoy all berries, pomegranate, lemon and lime.
- Oil: Flax oil, hemp oil and olive oil in small quantities.

#### Foods to avoid

- Any foods that weaken the Spleen or engender Dampness (e.g. sugar or dairy) or cause Damp-Heat (e.g. fried foods).
- Most fruit and simple sugars.
- Excessive amounts of red meat, especially feedlot beef.
- Eggs (because they promote Damp-Heat and obstruct the Liver/Gall Bladder).
- Refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, pasta, donuts, sugars, and pastries. Even avoid whole wheat bread unless sprouted (sprouted breads include Ezekiel brand bread.)
- Dairy products, including butter (no dairy until Damp signs recede).
- Fermented foods such as most soy sauce and yeast breads. (Rye bread and sourdough are yeast-free breads.)
- Oils and oily foods. Avoid butter, ghee, and coconut oil.
- Alcoholic beverages.

#### Re-establish healthy intestinal flora

Use a soil-based pro-biotic supplement or acidophilus.

#### Practice Simple Food Combining

Usually this means having protein with green and non-starchy vegetables, OR starches with green and non-starchy veggies at the same meal. That is, protein and starches should not be eaten together.

#### Cleanse Toxins

If needed, use aloe vera, oregano essential oil, grapefruit seed extract, or Chinese herbs such as pu gong ying, long dan cao, xiang fu, xia ku cao, qing pi, chai hu, and mu dan pi to cleanse toxins from the system. Digestive enzymes may be used to boost the Spleen Qi for a sluggish digestion.

#### **A few more tidbits**

- Organic, whole Foods are Better
- Most Americans need more bitter flavor, such as Angostura bitters.
- Microwave ovens turn proteins into poison.
- Lemon is alkalizing and good for the liver.

- Dampness is the most pervasive pathogen in the U.S. and is caused by eggs, dairy, white flour, white sugar, refined oils, and bad quality meat.
- Digestive enzymes = Spleen Qi. Enzymes eat up dampness in the body.
- Candida risk factors include antibiotics (even as a baby), birth control pills, chemotherapy, and excess sugar. Symptoms include craving sugar, bloating and gas, foggy brain, and environmental sensitivities.
- A stagnant liver is full of parasites, toxins, even plastics. The liver should be the size of a grapefruit. In the U.S. it's the size of a football.
- If there are gallstones, just open it up and take out the stone. Don't remove the whole organ. The gallbladder takes a load off the liver. It stores bile so the liver can rest.
- Adults who were not breastfed as infants may be obese. They should take GLA and colostrum to correct the deficiency.
- Stress usually results in a Yin deficiency.
- When eggs are used, put cayenne pepper on them to break up the glairy mucous in the egg white.
- How you eat may be as important as what you eat. Eat with gratitude, hopefully with one or two friends or family members, in a relaxed atmosphere, without overeating.

### **So What should I eat?**

Michael Pollan, in his new book, In Defense of Food, does a good job of summarizing what we learned in this class. "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." Eat good, whole, unprocessed, organic food. Don't overeat. And eat one third animal-based food and two thirds plant-based foods. And then—enjoy!