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An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Benjamin Franklin

Notes from My Desk: Nutrition 101

People often ask me what they can do at home to help maximize health. A positive change in your diet is a great way to increase long-term health benefits.

It's as simple as getting back to nature and **consuming more whole foods**. Try to get 5-9 servings of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. One serving is about the size of a handful, so it's easier to do than you think. This will ensure you are getting enough vitamins and antioxidants (vitamins A, C and E and minerals selenium and zinc that prevent free-radical damage associated with aging) in your diet, not to mention fiber.

Vegetables and fruits are alkaline. The American diet tends to be acidic (animal protein, sugar, caffeine, processed food). When the body is in a constant state of acidosis, it can lead to chronic and degenerative disease. Eating fruits and vegetables helps restore the body's pH neutrality so that the alkalizing minerals in your body don't become taxed.

I also use a great supplement called **Green Vibrance**. This powder has a lot of greens, probiotics and antioxidants and tastes the best out of the ones I've tried. I mix a scoop with half a glass of orange juice in the morning. Chamberlains carries Green Vibrance.

I also recommend taking a good **multivitamin and a multimineral supplement**. I like the brands at the local health food stores, such as Chamberlains or Whole Foods. They tend to be made with organic easy-to-assimilate nutrients.

Omega 3 fatty acids are essential since we get an out-of-proportion ratio of Omega 6 fatty acids in our diet. These come in the form of vegetable oils in our quest to lower

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our intake of saturated fat. Omega 3's and Omega 6's work in synergy, so if we get too high of a ratio of O-6 to O-3, it can lead to an imbalance. Omega 6 increases inflammation, blood clotting and the immune response. Omega 3 decreases inflammation, thins the blood and is non-immunoreactive. Not getting enough Omega 3 in one's diet can lead to heart disease, cancer, arthritis and allergies. The three major types of Omega 3's are ALA, EPA and DHA. Flax seed oil only has ALA; Marine Algae only has DHA and cold water marine fish contain EPA and DHA.

Suggestion: Eat a variety of fish high in Omega 3's three times a week, such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon. You can also take an Omega 3 fish oil supplement that contains vitamin E and antioxidants. This helps eliminate the fish aftertaste that can otherwise occur.

For more information, I highly recommend the books Food and Mood and Age Proof your Body by Elizabeth Somer. She is a nutritionist who gives great, easy-to-understand information. In Food and Mood, she explains the link between food and our neurotransmitters that are responsible for the way we think and feel. Eating whole foods is essential to feeling and being our best.

One last thing I'd like to mention is the role of our **digestive system** in maintaining overall health. The largest part of the immune system in our bodies lies within our digestive tract. It's responsible for making sure that only certain substances such as nutrients are permeable to our bloodstream. NSAIDs, steroids, antibiotics, antihistamines, caffeine, alcohol, candida overgrowth, prescription and nonprescription drugs make the intestines more permeable. This can lead to systemic inflammation, Crohn's disease, autoimmune disorders, IBS, CFS and food allergies.

To alleviate leaky gut syndrome, include digestive enzymes, probiotics, zinc and oatmeal to your daily regimen. This is essential in healing the mucosal lining. I like the Michael's brand proteolytic digestive enzyme 10X strength. This is good to help with digestive upsets and decrease inflammation that leads to weight gain. Total Immune Booster is a good probiotic you can order via the Internet. Health food stores also carry reputable brands.