



FAMILY FITNESS ASSOCIATION

Nutritional Guidelines (Members Only)

Introduction

Our society has managed to take something which, on the surface, should be relatively simple, and made it remarkably complex.

But, eating can be simple...

It just takes a shift in perspective.

Our understanding of food is shaped by many things: Our culture, our family dynamic, media and advertising, government recommendations, and of course, personal preferences and experiences.

Along the way, several of these influences have taken us down a distorted path.

So much so, that it can be difficult at times to recognize what is real from what is misinformation or flat out lies.

What makes up this shift in perspective?

A mental shift away from food as entertainment to one of enjoyment... (there is a difference.)

A shift away from the concept of 'speed and convenience' to a mindset where

food is viewed as the very foundation of our health...

Good nutrition and the ever accelerating pace of our lives do not have to be incompatible.

Awareness of our food choices, also known as “mindful eating” is the quickest way to be sure food serves our long-term needs, and doesn’t become an enemy we battle on a daily basis.

I hope that together we can bring simplicity, clarity and enjoyment back to the table.



Purpose

First, I was driven to write this Guide as a response to the constant requests of my clients who want some simple rules to work with, when it comes to making sound nutritional choices.

I regularly hear clients say, “Just tell me what to eat!”

I invite you to look at this guide this way:

“If the foods you are eating on a daily or weekly basis don’t line up with the clear recommendations in this guide, it is possible you need to review your particular choice(s).

Some may not be serving your best interests.”

The recommendations contained here are based upon science, not fads, opinions or marketing objectives.

Secondly, the intent here is to provide proven, real-world strategies for making better food choices...not to comply with the same old rules that simply don’t work for most people.

Finally, I am hoping to disrupt the patterns we all fall into with our food intake; to

change the deeply-engrained habits that get us all into trouble.

Once we stop eating out of rote behavior, and start putting more thought into food, the impact upon our health will be astounding.

Let's get started!

NOTE: None of the information in this document is intended to be medical advice. These are only recommendations.

If you have any concerns about dietary issues or have any medical conditions which compromise your health, you should consult your physician.

You should never make radical changes to your diet with doing so.



General Meal Principles

I originally wrote these “rules” nearly a decade ago. I have updated them periodically, as more information emerged.

1. Eat 4-6 small meals per day instead of 2-3 large ones. Eating frequently will bump up your metabolism because of the “cost” of digesting food. This will burn more calories. In fact, people following certain weight loss plans complain about eating far more food than they are used to eating!

In addition, eating frequent small meals prevents your blood sugar from dropping too low...which leads to poor choices.

2. Practice the art of slow eating. It takes roughly 20 minutes for the signal that says “I’m full” to reach the brain and shut down the hunger signals.

Many people can consume vast amounts of food during this time.

Being aware of this bit of physiology gives you the control over it! Eating slowly will reduce the total number of calories you consume when hunger strikes.

- 3. Eat a “lean” protein at each meal.** This means: lean beef, chicken, fish, bison, ostrich, pork, hamburger or turkey burger that is AT LEAST 93% lean, etc. Protein helps build muscle, and is very “costly” metabolically. It burns calories just to break the protein down.

Protein also keeps you feeling fuller longer.

NOTE: Limit your beef intake to grass-fed beef only!

- 4. Read food labels!** Never believe hearsay or magazine articles about what certain foods contain. Find out for yourself. Once you start reading the labels, you will become a more educated shopper.
- a. If it says “partially hydrogenated...” this is a trans-fat. Don’t buy it. If it says “high fructose corn syrup”, do not buy it!
 - b. Be aware of the various names for sugar. Be on the lookout for added sugars on the label under the names: corn sugar, maltodextrin, dextrin, fructose, maltose, most syrups, glucose...in fact there are as many as 60 different names for sugar!
 - c. Make note of the serving size. Often what appears to be a single serving package may actually contain 2 or more “servings”, so ALL of the items listed on the label will need to be multiplied by that number.
- 5. Exercise!** Building muscle mass increases your base metabolism. This means you will burn more calories just by walking around. This works because muscle tissue is a sugar-burning factory.

As we age, we have less muscle tissue, and therefore less ability to burn sugar. Combine this with a slowing metabolism and a tendency towards less activity, and an unchanged caloric intake, and you have a steady increase in body fat – even if your body mass stays the same! I call this the

“The Fat Gap”.

6. Always have “emergency foods” in the house. If you do not have healthy alternatives sitting in the fridge or the cupboard, you will inevitably sabotage your weight management efforts with poor food choices.

Some suggestions are: Mixed nuts, steamed veggies, part-skim mozzarella (or hard-cheeses), boiled eggs, unprocessed deli meats like turkey, etc.

In my experience, NOT having the proper food in the house is the #1 source of failure for anyone trying to manage their weight!

7. Write things down. There is something magic about putting pen to paper. You should keep a food journal or at the very least, write down about 6-8 of your favorite healthy meal combinations, and post it on your refrigerator.

By doing this you remind yourself of what a good meal is, and are more likely to have those foods in the house.

8. Attempt to drink 50% of your body weight in ounces of water daily! This is vital to good health, protein metabolism, and waste product removal.

9. You should strive for 5-8 helpings of veggies per day. They are our primary source for minerals, helpful enzymes, “good” carbs and more. You can’t get too much of this food group!

All your meals should be based around this food group, as well as some fruits, beans, mixed nuts and a healthy lean protein.

Realistically...no one does this, except possibly vegetarians. You may want to look at trying some of the healthy “green superfood” powders, as a way to offset this lack of veggie intake.

10. Supplement with Omega 3’s: Males should take 3-5 grams of Omega 3’s

each day. Females should strive for 2-4 grams. There are too many benefits to even list, but for now, you need to know that it will promote a gain in lean muscle mass. Muscle mass is good!

The way food is now processed has greatly diminished the amount of omega 3 fatty acids in our food, so a good supplement is necessary.

Just be VERY certain your preferred brand is free of contaminants. This should be clearly stated on the label. If you would like, you can purchase vetted and proven fish oil from FFA. Please drop me a line if you need help.

- 11. Limit fruit IF you are trying to lose weight.** Yes, most of us need to eat more fruits. However, too often fruits are lumped into the same category as veggies. This should NOT be the case.

If you are trying to lose weight – just like grains – fruits are NOT your friend! Fructose can be a problem for most of us.

Also, do your best to avoid the super-sweet tropical fruits like mango, passionfruit, etc.

- 12. Get sleep.** Studies have shown that people who get more than 9 hours of sleep, and those who get less than 6 hours are heavier than those who get 7-8 hours per night.

New studies are proving there is a natural waste product removal process which the brain relies upon and this only happens during quality sleep. If you have difficulty sleeping, you MUST find the cause, and NOT rely on sleep aids.

Fix sleep first!

- 13. Use “Nutrient Timing” to your advantage.** If you must eat “bad carbs” to get a sugar fix, you should limit this to the one hour immediately following a workout.

Your body will use even simple sugars more efficiently (replacing used

glycogen) during this period.

Nutrient timing will impact how calories are handled. Other examples of nutrient time are:

- a. Eating sugar at night can shut off valuable fat burning processes.
- b. Protein mixed with sugar post-training will increase protein absorption.
- c. Delaying the morning meal – as in an intermittent fasting format – will allow fat burning processes to continue.
- d. Not eating after 8:00pm will allow natural fat-burning processes to take place.



Rules to Defuse “Dangerous” Situations

If we are going to be honest here...we pretty much get ourselves into trouble. It's not as if something “happens” to us.

We create our own nutritional challenges.

Here are some recommendations to avoid making bad decisions:

- When going to a social event where you KNOW there will be tempting – but unhealthy – choices, you should try the following:
 - o Eat a handful of mixed nuts just prior to going to the event. This will trigger the “I am full” signal in the brain, and you will tend to eat less.
 - o Fill your stomach with water for the same reasons.
 - o Alternate alcoholic beverages with a glass of water to both decrease intake and create the fullness effect listed above.
 - o Keep a large supply of mixed nuts handy at your workplace.

- Never go more than 3 hours between meals or snacks!
- Avoid refined sugar and wheat-based products at all times. These food trigger the need for *MORE* of these foods. They are both highly addictive.
- Situations that trigger cravings for carbohydrates:
 - o Stressful situations
 - o Poor sleep
 - o Hangovers



"Hunger is NOT an emergency"

- Dr. John Berardi

Weekend Rules

Many of my clients follow a "step" program. **A step program usually means, two steps forward, one step back.** The backwards step generally happens on the weekends – or vacations.

The mistake here is getting caught up in 'vacation mode'; that mindset where you wave all the normal rules, and eat and drink as if consequences have all vanished. This mentality can wipe out the previous week's progress, or in more drastic cases, set you back months.

Rules for keeping your choices under control on the weekend:

- **Limit alcohol intake.** Visualize every drink as a regular, sugar-filled soda. This may help slow you down. After all, this is essentially what each drink amounts to. Remember this “pattern interrupt” rule. If you have to ask yourself if you want another, it’s time to stop.
- **Schedule one “cheat meal”.** This is defined as a *ONE-TIME* occurrence on any given weekend. This meal ends when you push yourself away from the table, and it should never last more than one hour.

The purpose of a cheat meal is to convince yourself that you are not forever being deprived of foods you enjoy. This will help with compliance, if you follow the above limitations.

Force yourself to adhere to the rules for the remaining weekend meals. Remember: At the end of the day, cheating is still cheating!

- **Get out of vacation mode!** Every weekend should not be treated as a mini hedonistic feast. Weekends are your chance to get in extra activities that you couldn’t complete during the week. Plan for that one cheat meal, and then stay firmly planted in reality!



“Never reward yourself with food...you are not a dog.” - Anonymous

Actual Meal Strategies

We now realize that planning is a huge part of winning the nutritional battle. Here are some tested methods for making planning easier:

- 1) **Schedule two evenings per week for meal prep.** Just the thought of preparing meals on a nightly basis can force many to just order out instead. However, if you set aside two evenings (I recommend Sunday and Wednesday) for meal prep and planning, you will save a HUGE amount of time.

Prep by:

- Cutting the veggies
- Marinating the right portion sizes for meats
- Planning which meals will happen on which evening will take much of the pressure off dinner time

- 2) **Plan out about 10-12 “go to” meals.** Very rarely do we tend to wander outside our normal eating patterns.

The average person generally eats the same amount of food, cooked the same way, often for years on end.

This is fine as long as those meals are not a part of the problem!

Having 10-12 healthy options that you know how to make, and know that you enjoy, will deliver shortcuts to the process.

This doesn't mean you shouldn't mix it up once in a while, but always having the ingredients for your “starting lineup” on hand will prevent poor decisions.

- 3) **Dessert should NOT be a regular occurrence!** Each meal does not have to end with dessert. Dessert should be a treat reserved for special occasions.

Avoid making it a part of the evening pattern, and especially avoid eating dessert while dining out, since these indulgences tend to be WAY over the top.

- 4) **Plan your meal around a lean protein and a vegetable.** That's it. We have gotten into the habit of insisting upon some form of starch (pasta, potato, rice, etc.) but this is NOT a necessity.

This is an example of an engrained negative habit.

If you can break this one, you are well on your way to your goal!

- 5) **Accept the fact that you will NOT have bready sandwiches for lunch as the default.**

For many people, lunch is a far bigger problem than dinner. You're at work, don't always bring your own food, and rely on takeout FAR too often.

People who own restaurants *WANT* to make good tasting food. They *NEED* you to come back regularly. Your health is *NOT* their priority!

- Know the local restaurants and have 5-6 'go to' meals that are the ONLY ones you will order. See #2 above.
- Never default to sandwiches.
- Bring your own food from home so you can control quality and quantity.



Our food should be our medicine and our medicine should be our food. - Hippocrates

Foods to Remove From Your Repertoire!

Everything we do either takes us towards our goals or away from them. Every time you eat these foods, you take one step away from your goals.

Please note: In many cases, I have listed 'conditions' under which eating these foods temporarily is okay.

Also, keep in mind that these foods do *NOT* have to be removed forever...only until you achieve your desired body composition, and thereafter, only in moderation.

Starting today, you should remove:

Bread, rice, cereal, pasta and crackers: Condition: Only if you are already at your ideal weight range OR immediately post-workout.

If you are looking to lose weight, these food are NOT your friend. It doesn't matter if it's "whole grain" or brown rice. Avoid these if you are looking to lose pounds.

The above list includes all forms of chips and bagged snacks!

Breakfast cereal may taste good, but it is EXTREMELY disproportionately expensive versus the cost to produce it, and it has little redeeming nutritional value.

Anything Fried: There are NO approved conditions here! Fried foods are always bad for you on multiple levels. I get it. They taste great. But the downside is too severe!

Commercially-grown beef: If you're going to eat less red meat, which we all

should, you may as well make it high-quality. Shell out the extra few dollars to eat grass-fed beef. There are many sources now for local, grass-fed beef which is LITERALLY a completely different animal than grain-fed commercial options.

Refined Sugars: You knew this obvious one was in here. Remember, one helping of refined sugars is generally NOT an issue. However, in the US, it's the large volume of refined sugars which cause the problem. Candy, soda, cookies, ice cream, etc.

Conditions? Maybe...maybe after a workout – if you don't already use it often. And even then, the next category is excluded!

Commercial Baked Goods: Keep in mind, one of the last holdouts for trans fats is this industry! This is the reason Twinkies will survive just about anything! Trans fats will mess with your metabolism. We simply do NOT process these properly!

There are ZERO conditions under which commercially baked goods are

okay.



Conclusion

I hope you find this document helpful!

Remember the key premise:

“If the foods you are eating on a daily or weekly basis don’t line up with the clear recommendations in this guide, it is possible you need to review your particular choices.

They may not all be serving your best interests.”

Please reach out to me with any questions you may have!

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