

Eat to win!

The type of fuel that your body burns will directly determine the degree of efficiency that your body works for you. Although it is important to eat adequate amounts, and good quality complex carbohydrates and proteins before an athletic event, in my opinion, it is even more important to eat correctly **all day, everyday**. Little differences, over time can pay off big dividends in better health and performance down the road. This requires an understanding of what the foods and drinks that you consume actually contain. It requires questioning **everything** that you put in your mouth, and using self control to say “no” to empty, energy stealing calories. I encourage all my patients, but especially the athletes to avoid:

1) Refined sugar. This is considered an “anti-nutrient” because it leaches healthy nutrients from your body, inhibits your immune system from functioning fully, addicts you to more and more sweets, and causes a heavy burden on your pancreas and adrenal glands.

Healthy alternatives: Stevia, xylitol, raw honey, date powder.

2) Refined carbohydrates. These are products made from white flour (like cookies, pastries, and white bread), white rice, most cold cereals, and potato chips. These are called “empty calories” because they are stripped of vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, enzymes and fiber.

Healthy alternatives: whole grain or sprouted grain products, brown rice.

3) Soda pop. The average American drinks 50 gallons of soda per year. The phosphoric acid in soda steals minerals from your body. The caffeine makes you lose precious water, and we already mentioned the damage that sugar causes you.

Healthy alternatives: Water with fresh lemon, non-sweetened fruit juice, fresh fruit smoothy.

4) Artificial sweeteners: These are all chemicals that are toxic to the body and should be avoided.

NutraSweet, Splenda, and Sweet and Low can actually cause you to **gain** weight, experience dizziness, nausea, depression, digestive problems, and headache, just name a few side effects.

5) Trans fats. These are found in all kinds of packaged or processed foods. Look at labels for “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated oils”. These are saturated fats that are toxic to your body, and allow chronic inflammation to cause pain and or tissue degeneration. Unfortunately it takes the body a long time to get rid of trans fats. For example, the trans fat in 1 serving of fast food French-fries stays in your system causing harm for 7 months.

Healthy alternatives: cook with olive or coconut oil.

6) Hydrogenated, pasteurized dairy products. Cow’s milk is the #1 most common allergenic food. Food sensitivities can cause a wide variety of health issues such as digestive problems, skin problems, muscle/joint pain, brain fog, hyperactivity, and headache. Dairy has even been linked to the blood vessel damage in cardiovascular disease, and very often the cause of chronic ear and sinus infections.

Alternatives: Almond milk, Rice milk, Soy milk, whole raw Goat’s milk.

The foods that you should consume can fit into 3 simple categories:

1) Eat foods that can rot or spoil, but before they do. Unhealthy foods are laden with preservatives and stripped of healthy essential oils to lengthen their shelf life. Even bugs know not to eat them.

2) Eat foods as close to nature as possible, the way they would have been eaten 100 years ago.

(Example: oatmeal instead of Cheerios)

3) Eat as much color as you can. Fruits and vegetables are packed with phyto-nutrients. These are naturally occurring chemicals like carotenoids, polyphenols, indoles and saponins in the foods which provide health benefits like anti-inflammation, anti-aging, anti-cancer, and anti-cardiovascular disease through anti-oxidant activity. The darker, deeper colored fruits and veggies have a stronger concentration of these beneficial nutrients. So eat as wide a variety of color as you can like blueberries, raspberries, apricots, and plums, red cabbage, spinach, peppers, yams, broccoli, and kale.

God has made our bodies with an amazing ability to survive on less than optimum nutrition. So many go for years, eating wrong and thinking they are “getting away with it”. But for your body to THRIVE and perform at its *optimum*, it, like a high tech machine, requires the proper fuel to do so. Happy eating!