

Nutrition Highlights 2009
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Welcome to another new year! January has passed and February is upon us. It's time to gear up for National Heart Month and GO RED Day on Friday, February 6th. I'm quite sure 2009 is full of those personal commitments we make every January after the holidays have left us with a few extra pounds. Or maybe THIS is the year you are going to make a big change for your 'extended warranty' on life! Well...let's take a look at some of the highlights of nutrition (or diabetes or heart disease) news over the last year and see if any of them give you a little motivation to change. Did you know that:

- 1 out of every 8 New York City adults has Diabetes
- 1 out of every 2 Pima Indians in the western USA has Diabetes
- 18.2 million Americans have diabetes and 54 million have pre-diabetes
- Pre-Diabetes is predicted to increase the number of people diagnosed with diabetes by four times by 2020
- 12 million men have diabetes and 11.2 million women NOW
- The growth of diabetes in women is expected to increase statistically by 220% by 2050 and growth in men 'only' 174%
- Obesity is the leading cause of metabolic syndrome and diabetes and is the cause of 112 million deaths each year.
- Almost 50% of women do NOT survive their first heart attack
- The leading cause of heart disease in women is diabetes (from obesity)

Now...if that all doesn't get you women a little concerned, we could look at the rates of depression associated with obesity and diabetes and the impact of medications on the body's metabolism, or we could talk about the natural aging process deteriorating our lean body mass and therefore our body's ability to metabolize those calories in that chocolate bar we can't stop craving because we have a need for the uppers in cocoa beans, because we are so manic about our weight!!!! Oh dear! What a roller coaster ride we are on!!!

Now ladies, since the month of February is Heart Month and February 6th has been designated National GO RED for your HEART Day, let's look at some evidence that helps us make healthier choices and do our part to not become one of those nasty statistics.

Scientists have long held to the concept that energy 'balance' (or imbalance in the case of weight loss or gain) is key to weight management. Calories IN vs. Calories OUT. However, in our lives, we have seen some serious shifts in energy output. We no longer beat the rugs over the back banister or hang the sheets to dry or scrub the oven to get the grease off or walk to the neighborhood store to pick up daily produce, or sit on our butts and wiggle across the floor to polish the hardwood floors! (Oh dear, I think I'm dating myself!) Suffice it to say, we are pretty docile these days, hitting some buttons and maybe bending over once or twice a day. Not a good thing!

Now the researchers have come up with the idea that ‘genes’ are playing an important role here. Genetically speaking, our current bodies are programmed to withstand famine. But we have enough food to feed twice our population – and we are ‘eating it’! Well...not the vegetables and fruits so much...you know the drill. So here we are...eating more, doing less, programmed to store energy as yes – FAT. And we are very unhappy about it (or even depressed)

And so GO RED says, get up and move, claim your power, just say NO to ‘junky’ foods and YES to the fruits and vegetables, NO to the movie on the sofa and YES to the walk in the park, NO to the inner voice saying “you need MORE” and YES to the ‘little’ voice that’s saying, “you can have more later if you really need it,” NO to the candy bar, bagel, or 100 calorie Oreos (you’ll always want more!) and YES to a nice apple, pear, or bunch of grapes. Or maybe a yogurt or handful of almonds – yes you can put a little dark chocolate in there too.

“Foods That Love You Back” was the title of a program I attended this year. Well...it was sponsored by Hershey, so it was about cocoa. And it turns out that an ounce of that little dark chocolate has more antioxidants than a cup of blueberries or pomegranate juice – who knew? Nuts, oils, fruits, vegetables, and oh yes, fish... (albeit watch the mercury so vary the catch and have it 3-5 times a week for your omega-3’s) in addition to the cocoa have the ability to ‘love you back’ and will help your body stop making fat. Those monounsaturated fats in nuts and oils actually inhibit triglyceride formation and the storing of fat.

To the concept of energy balance, the research says “constant balance” – no meal skipping (that leaves you in starvation slow mode) and no over-indulgence (you’ll make fat, trust me), but consistent ‘functional eating’ – just the amount of calories (or a tad less if you want to lose wt) every few hours. Let your body know there’s a consistent supply of food as energy and it will stay humming like a Harley. Starve it and you’re asking for an extra layer around the middle. Keep your satiety sensors in balance and you’ll stop the night cravings. Go for a walk and it won’t increase your appetite, it will decrease it. And above all, keep your sense of humor. Don’t sweat the small stuff. Don’t obsess on the big stuff – remember it all passes! Our job is to ride the wave with dignity and grace! And take care of ourselves in the process. So happy riding...or walking...or dipping some nice strawberries in some dark chocolate, and remember to wear RED on Feb 6th! It’s time to take the power back.

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