

Cancer Answers

Volume 4 Number 9
February 2011
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Healthier Eating in 2011

This month I am writing the first installment of articles offering simple, effective ways to a healthier YOU. The focus this month is on forming healthier eating habits. I know that many of you are doing great with healthy eating. However, most of us can use a little help on a regular basis. The concept of healthy eating may be quite new to a few of you. So, to all of you here we go.

Perhaps most important part of healthy eating is to look at your individual health, lifestyle, likes and dislikes, and recommendations a medical expert advises before you begin developing a plan. I believe that one of the biggest reasons healthy eating patterns are abandoned is for lack of following a plan that will work for you. Those of you with families have will have a harder time because you are not the only one you are preparing the eating plan for...but, the good news is - it is completely doable. Do not try to make major changes overnight. Take baby steps and wean yourself, and your family, off of unhealthy food slowly. Do not feel like you cannot ever have any foods that are bad for you. We all need a little food splurge from time to time. The key is to make those times few and farther between. Choose organic, fresh foods as much as possible. I know that those of you on budgets will have a tougher time purchasing mostly organic produce and meats. Also, time can be a major factor for not making "fresh" choices. On days when time is short, opt for organic/natural processed foods like Amy's Pizza with a green salad and whole wheat bread sticks or Cascadian Farms "Spud Puppies" with Jenny-O turkey patties and an organic frozen vegetable. It does not have to be difficult - or be full of food lacking in flavor to bet healthy.

Take an hour each week and write out each day's meals. This will allow for less grabbing for the closest, easiest food you can grab when you are tired and hungry. Each morning you can whet your appetite for whatever is on the menu that evening. Keep these guidelines n mind for meal ideas.

#1 Sodium content - Most Americans consume nearly 10 times the recommended amount of sodium which is 800 mg/day. Major brand soups are generally extremely high in sodium. Watch out for hidden salt in frozen chicken that has been injected with chicken broth and most processed meats. Check for low-sodium options and don't add salt to food at the table. Try one of the Mrs. Dash salt substitutes - they are great.

#2 Fat content - Choose fats like olive and canola to cook with and try to eat 3 servings of fish per week. Avocados, nuts and peanut butter contain "good" fat. Choose a PB that doesn't have a lot of added sugar. Beans, of all varieties and lentils are a great source on plant protein. Make home-made bean or lentil soups that can simmer for hours while the cook is away. Adding other vegetables, barley and spicy seasoning make soups great budget meals that are satisfying. This is a good place to start your journey to getting healthier. Have FUN!

National Lymphedema Day

March 6 is the National Lymphedema Network's nationwide celebration of those who live with lymphedema. Lymphedema Awareness "D" Day is a day that we raise our voices together and say: "This is it! We demand treatment, coverage and support for this condition." Lymphedema is no longer a rare condition and "D" Day honors the many people living with it today. This day provides us with a special opportunity to alert our local media, medical community and neighborhoods about lymphedema; to create awareness about the condition, who is at risk, and available treatments.

Has lymphedema affected you? Check online, with your physician or your massage therapist to see if your local community is holding special events honoring, informing and encouraging people like you and me. Learn about how diet, exercise and lifestyle can help control lymphedema.

Here's something you can do anytime to help with lymphedema. I was recently introduced to this incredible adjunct therapy and am excited at the benefits it offers. In the company's own words:

"The Flexitouch system is an innovative, automated device designed for the at-home treatment of lymphedema. Based on the gentle work-and-release of manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) therapy, the Flexitouch system is the only device proven to be more effective than self-MLD in maintaining or reducing limb volume between clinic visits.1 By removing the obstacles to consistent, effective self-care, the Flexitouch system helps patients improve their overall health and enjoy a higher quality of life."

Check them out at www.flexitouch.com