

## **General Diet & Nutrition Information**

### **Eat A Breakfast**

The importance of breakfast can not be over emphasised. And no – a cup of coffee to kick start your day does not count! Your metabolism slows overnight and by skipping breakfast it remains slow. Inevitably as our blood sugar decreases by mid morning we are left reaching for a high sugar and/or high fat snack. An ideal breakfast is one, which is low in sugar (so we don't set ourselves up for sugar highs and lows for the day – more on this later), and which contains some protein. Go for fruit with some natural yoghurt or add brazil nuts, pumpkin or sunflower seeds to your (low sugar) cereal.

### **Eat a balanced diet**

To give your body what it needs to work most efficiently, roughly 60% of your calories should come from carbohydrates, 30% from fat (a maximum of 10% of this to be saturated) and 10% from protein.

### **Eat smaller and more often**

Aim to eat 3 smaller meals daily with 2 snacks in between meals. This ensures that your metabolism is working to its optimum level (i.e. burning calories efficiently). Aim for variety – most people eat the same 40 foods in a week – we should be aiming for around 100 foods. Try to eat the same meal no more than twice in a week.

### **Drink plenty of water**

Its vital to keep properly hydrated – most especially when exercising as to lose fat or gain muscle you must stay hydrated. Even a 2% drop in hydration can cause dizziness, tiredness and a drop in concentration. Dehydration is also often mistake for hunger so good reason to top up! Dehydration also leads to higher cortisol output (stress hormone) with its negative repercussions ranging from increased oxidative stress to the brain to increased fat storage. You should be drinking about 2 litres a day or enough to make your urine run nearly clear. 2 litres of cold water a day – have been shown to boost calorie burn by up to 100 calories. These calories are burnt as you heat the cold water to body temperature. Don't rely on sugary drinks or tea or coffee to reach your water requirement. 1 cup of tea/coffee beer will take 4 cups of water from your body

### **Cut down on caffeine & alcohol**

Caffeine is all too often relied upon to kick start the day and to keep you boosted throughout the day. Both tea and coffee cause fluctuations in blood sugar so ought to be kept to a strict minimum or eliminated altogether. Try to replace regular tea with green tea. Research has shown that up to 5 cups of green tea a day can raise calories burn by 80 cal. Limit intake of alcohol (especially in the month before the marathon) – alcohol has 7 calories per gram (close to that of fat at 9 cal) which are known as 'empty calories' because they have no nutritional value and go straight into fat storage.

### **Eat plenty of fresh food**

The fresher the food the better - a good rule of thumb is to shop for little and often. Frozen fruit and veg can often retain more nutrients than their 'fresh' counterparts, as they are flash frozen on picking.

### **Eat five fruit & veg a day**

Fresh fruit is better than dried fruit (tends to be high sugar). Limit intake of bananas and grapes as they tend to quickly raise blood sugar

### **Limit frying and use low fat cooking methods**

When frying use very little oil – preferably olive or canola oil. Where possible – poach, grill or bake.

### **Eat good fats**

Fat is high in calories if eaten excessively they will cause weight gain (just as carbs and protein will!), however they ought not to be cut out of the diet as monounsaturates and polyunsaturates have health benefits and our bodies suffer when lacking them. What we need to focus on is cutting down on saturated fats (the bad kind) and to ensure we are getting enough of the health promoting fats.

*Saturated fats* raise your cholesterol and increase your risk of heart disease. They are generally solid at room temperature and are found in animal products (meat, eggs & dairy) and tropical oils such as coconut and palm oil. Cut down on mayonnaise and other high fat sauces. Also limit intake of butter. These add huge numbers of 'sneaky' calories. Substitute butter with Benecol. Limit intake of red meat especially lamb & duck as they tend to be very high fat. When eating out try to have fish instead of red meat.

*Trans fats* also need to be watched out for. These are monounsaturated fats, which have gone through the process of hydrogenation to make them solid at room temperature. Trans fats have similar (if not worse) effects than saturated fats and are found in a huge range of processed foods such as margerines, biscuits and cakes. Look out for terms on labels such as – hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated veg oil (a.k.a trans fats!)

*Monounsaturates* - olive, canola and peanut oil and avocados are high in monounsaturates.

*Polyunsaturates* - contained in sunflower and corn oil. Most famous of the polyunsaturates are Omega 3 and Omega 6 found in oily fish such as mackerel and salmon nuts and seeds. They actively help lower our cholesterol and reduce our risk of heart disease.

### **Cut down or eliminate processed food**

Processed foods are generally packed with salt, sugar, saturated and trans fats. Where possible make your own meals.

### **Cut down on sugar and salt**

Excess sugar in our diet especially refined sugars are playing havoc with our blood sugar levels - leading to lethargy, weight gain and type 2 diabetes and eating them is a cycle. We feel tired so we eat high sugar foods (which are often also high in fat) then feel better as our blood sugar rockets. This is followed by an almost immediate dip in blood sugar as insulin is released to mop up the sugar to return blood glucose levels to normal - and so you feel tired and again reach for a high sugar food.

The Glycemic Index (GI) rates each food according to how quickly it affects a rise in blood glucose levels benchmarked against glucose, which on the GI scale of 1-100 is 100. The GI of a food is calculated by feeding a person however much of the food is needed to give 50 grams of the food being tested.

High GI foods (e.g. potatoes, rice, biscuits and sugary foods) cause peaks and troughs in energy levels in comparison with low GI foods (oats, pulses, wholemeal bread/rice/pasta) where energy is released over a longer period of time. Thus consuming low GI foods will stop excessive insulin production and fluctuating energy levels. Excessive insulin production also inhibits the fat burning mechanisms of the body and thus a diet consisting of a lot of high GI foods will prevent effective fat loss. (See attached GI Index doc for breakdown of common foods according to their GI rating).

Salt can contribute to high blood pressure increasing our risk of heart disease and stroke. Add less in cooking and cut down on processed foods. Cutting back on salt can help flush out up to 3lbs of retained excess water from your body.

### **Eat beans, lentils and wholegrain foods**

These underrated and underused foods are full of soluble fibre, which helps lower our cholesterol and packed with protein making them a healthy alternative to meat and animal products, which are higher in fat particularly saturated fat.

Swap your white foods for brown alternatives. When you eat wholemeal and brown foods you are getting them in their most nutritious state. When they are processed to make them white they lose most of their vitamin, mineral and fibre content. Swap wholemeal bread, rice and pasta instead of white.

### **Sample Meals**

#### **Breakfast**

Fruit smoothie (no frozen yoghurt)

Low sugar breakfast cereal/muesli/porridge with skimmed or semi-skimmed milk.

Fruit salad with low fat yoghurt

Wholemeal toast with tablespoon peanut butter

Poached eggs on wholemeal toast

Egg omelette with peppers mushrooms & onion

#### **Lunch**

Soup (watch out for ones with high salt levels) & wholemeal bread

Wholemeal bread with tomato, avocado (squeeze lemon juice on avocado) & onion

Wrap with tuna (little or no mayo) and salad Any salads (bar coleslaw & potato salad)

Sushi

### **Dinner**

Cajun spiced chicken/salmon salad

Grilled/baked fish (e.g. salmon) with vegetables or salad

Grilled chicken or seafood with stir-fried vegetables (small amount of noodles optional)

### **Snacks**

Low sugar yoghurts, pears, apples, grapes, melon, mango and kiwis, almonds or brazil nuts, dried apricots or prunes sunflower & pumpkin seeds.

## **A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SUPERFOODS**

Some foods have greater potential to supply nutrients to the body than others. The following list includes many such foods, some of which are now been dubbed 'superfoods' such is their nutritional value.

**A** is for apple. Apples are good for the heart and the circulation. Its pectin helps the body remove cholesterol and toxic metals from the body. The sugar in apples is mostly fructose, a simple sugar, which helps to keep blood sugar balanced. Apples are a good source of vitamins A and B. Minerals in apples include potassium, calcium, phosphorus and sodium.

**B** is for berries: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and cranberries. Recent research has found that the darker the berry, the higher the concentration of antioxidants which are useful for mopping up cancer-causing molecules in the body.

**C** is for carrots. Carrots contain betacarotene, the Vitamin A precursor, which is essential for proper night vision.

**D** is for drinks and while the harm associated with drinking coffee (raises blood pressure, believed to worsen PMS, increases risk of osteoporosis, affects the digestive system, etc) outweighs the benefits (i.e. it is a short-term brain stimulant), there is growing evidence that populations which consume large amounts of green tea have lower incidence of heart disease and some forms of cancer.

**E** is for eggs. Blood cholesterol, which is manufactured by the body from high intake of saturated fats, is associated with a higher risk of coronary heart disease but nutritionists point out that the cholesterol in food such as eggs and shellfish does not add to the circulating blood cholesterol. The World Health Organisation recommends we eat 10 eggs a week (including those used in cooking). It's the bioavailability of the protein in eggs (94 per cent of its protein is used by the body compared with 30 per cent of the protein in lentils) that is particularly impressive. Eggs are also a rich source of zinc, vitamins A, D, E and B.

**F** is for fish. We should eat at least 3 portions of fish a week particularly oily fish such as salmon, trout, tuna, and mackerel. It's the Omega 3 fatty acids, which protect the heart against cardiovascular disease by thinning the blood, lowering blood pressure, maintaining water balance and regulating blood sugar.

**G** is for garlic. Its role in stimulating the immune system is well known as well as its value in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

**H** is for honey, which has antibiotic and other immune system stimulating properties.

**I** is for indigestion aids, of which camomile is one of the most highly regarded. Camomile tea helps indigestion and stomach cramps. Grapefruit is also used to relieve indigestion and treat gastrointestinal upsets.

**J** is for fruit juices. Although whole fruit options is better.

**K** is for kiwi fruit, which contains almost twice as much vitamin C as an orange and more fibre than an apple.

**L** is for lemon. A glass of warm water with lemon juice added is now believed by many to be the perfect start to the day - for your digestive system.

**M** is for mushrooms, which have a higher percentage of protein than most other vegetables and are also extremely low in calories.

**N** is for nuts. Most are good sources of protein and fibre. Choose unsalted.

**O** is for oats which via porridge are valued as a complex carbohydrate food (or low glycaemic index as they raise blood sugar slowly). Oats also contain high levels of mood-lifting tryptophans.

**P** is for pulses, which include a range of dried and green beans, sprouting beans and soya products. Combined with wholegrains they are a great alternative to meat. Dry pulses (chickpeas, kidney beans, aduki beans, black-eyed beans, butter beans) are the richest plant source of protein. They are also a good source of vitamins and minerals.

**Q** is for quinoa, a South American grain that is becoming popular as an alternative to wheat for those sensitive to gluten. Quinoa is also popular among vegetarians because it has the highest and best quality protein of any of the grains.

**R** is for rice, which in its natural form is a rich source of B vitamins, vitamin E and fibre. Brown rice is the healthier option.

**S** is for seeds whose role in providing us with the essential fatty acids (the Omega 3 and Omega 6s) we need for healthy brains. Sunflower seeds (rich in protein and vitamin E), pumpkin seeds (rich in iron, phosphorous and zinc), sesame seeds (rich in calcium and B vitamins) and linseed (the seed of flax) mixed together are perfect sprinkled on salads, stir fry dishes and soup.

**T** is for tomatoes. As they are extremely rich in antioxidants, they protect against cancer and heart disease. Also low in sodium and quite rich in potassium, tomatoes help conditions such as high blood pressure and fluid retention.

**U** is for unsaturated fats, which are better for us. These include polyunsaturated fats - Omega 3 fatty acids (found mainly in oily fish) and Omega 6 fatty acids (found in sunflower oil, seeds and nuts) and mono unsaturated fats - found in olive oil.

**V** is for vitamins. The vital vitamins are vitamin A (essential for growth, skin and night and colour vision), vitamin C (an antioxidant which also aids wound healing and iron absorption), vitamin D (essential for bone formation as it is part of the calcium-absorption process) and the B vitamins (essential for growth, development and energy).

**W** is for water – try to drink at least 2 litres a day.

**X** is for exhaustion, which is an under-diagnosed side effect of unhealthy eating habits and poor diet. The more you exercise the better you will sleep!

**Y** is for yoghurt, which is a good source of calcium. Go for the natural versions.

**Z** is for zinc, one of the magic minerals. Selenium, iron, copper, calcium, iodine, manganese, phosphorus and potassium are the other minerals, which are deemed essential.