

THE PATIENT CHANNEL PRESENTS- Nutritional Needs: Prescription For Health

An apple a day..... We've all heard that adage many times.

However we're finding proof that saying may actually be rooted in truth.

I'm Dr. Mark Pochapin, Director of the Jay Monahan Center at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

Although problems such as cancer and heart disease can be linked to poor eating and a lack of exercise, there are foods that may actually help to protect us. Watch *Nutritional Needs: Prescription for Health*. You'll see that what you eat and how you live can help improve your health.

So what's wrong with the way we eat? Well, the first problem is a no-brainer – we eat too much – often more than we actually want.

Yvonne Lynch knows all about the risks associated with overeating and the wrong type of diet. She has diabetes.

Yvonne Lynch, Patient

"My reaction when I was first diagnosed, it, it gave me a sunken feeling in my stomach and I felt I would say—betrayed!"

Narrator

Yvonne has a history of eating foods high in fat and a habit of overeating. She would go on diets, lose a couple of pounds and then start eating the wrong types of foods again. But after the diabetes diagnosis, Yvonne decided that she had to get on the right track, and incorporate the proper nutrition and exercise into her daily routine.

Yvonne Lynch, Patient

"First thing I did after getting over that initial shock, I said to myself-I'll have to choose life or death—an early grave—so I went and I did some research on the effects of diabetes on your organs and it was so frightening to me. So decided, I said I'll have to comply with what I have learned about the dieting and the exercise."

Narrator

Yvonne began to change her lifestyle, but she didn't just do that by eating less. She began to change the types of foods she was eating.

A typical diet consists of one cup of oatmeal for breakfast, skim mil and fruit. Lunch includes a lean roast beef sandwich and a cup of fruit. Dinner consists of steamed or raw vegetables, tossed salad, chicken or fish, a small serving of potato or rice, diet soda or water. A mid afternoon snack includes one cup of fat free yogurt and an apple.

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist. Jackson Memorial Hospital

"The darker the colored greens, the more vitamins they have, so that's usually what I start my salads with as the base."

Narrator

Sue Friedman is a registered dietician who is tracking Yvonne's health. She agrees healthy eating is a privilege we can enjoy to the fullest in this country because we have the best quality and most abundant array of foods in the world.

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist. Jackson Memorial Hospital

"Probably not a good choice, how about if we go over to the other line, I think they have some better choices over there. Do you mind?"

"Healthy eating should not be thought of as a punishment or a sentence. It's something that you should enjoy doing and it's finding a balance again...it goes back to calories. What are your goals? What are you trying to achieve? If you're trying to lose weight then you have to decrease your calorie intake. If you're trying to maintain your weight, then obviously what you are eating is good and I would encourage exercise to be a part of that program."

Narrator

Sue recommends that people have 15-20 percent of their calories from protein, 20-35 percent of their calories coming from fat, and 45-65 percent of their calories from whole grains and high fiber carbohydrates.

Limiting portion sizes is another hurdle Yvonne is getting over.

Yvonne Lynch, Patient

"I measure my food and I also use a small plate."

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist. Jackson Memorial Hospital

"I try to get them to understand what a portion is and unfortunately, we're bombarded with restaurants that think that the bigger the plate and the more they put on it, the better it is. So I go back to basics. Pull out your measuring cups and your measuring spoons."

Narrator

Whether we eat a lot or a little, we often have no idea what it is we're actually putting into our bodies – whether a food has too much fat and too many calories or too few of the nutrients our bodies need to function properly. This is why it's so important to read nutritional labels when they're available. These will tell you how many calories you're consuming, as well as how much fat, fiber and protein the food contains and what percentage of your day's vitamins the product offers. Just remember that the amount of fat and calories shown on the panel relate to only one serving – and what you're actually consuming may be much more than this.

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American's tendency to underestimate portion size and ignore calories is contributing to an explosion in obesity. In fact, 65% percent of Americans are now overweight. So, should we all be dieting? Sue Friedman says "no."

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist, Jackson Memorial Hospital

"I look at diet as a four-letter word, it really shouldn't exist... it's a matter of making healthy food choices and that should be for the rest of your life."

Narrator

In order to ensure a lifetime of good health, our bodies need the right combination of proteins, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats and water. The wrong combination can lead to weight gain, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

Patricia Gregory, MA, RD

Dietician, Shands Hospital

"Eating well is really taking care of ourselves at the most basic level."

Narrator

How do you ensure you get the right combination? Stay tuned to find out.

Patricia Gregory, MA, RD

Dietician, Shands Hospital

"It's very important to me to think of food as a pleasure. I've often said it's certainly one of our first pleasures and it's often one of our last. And it really should add to our quality of life. We have a lot of guilt feelings around it because there's so much awful probably food out there, food that's not good for us, food that doesn't make us feel well."

Narrator

So how can we change our eating habits to avoid health problems? First, we can ensure we GET ALL OF OUR NECESSARY NUTRIENTS – from calcium to zinc – by eating a wide variety of foods, starting with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Patricia Gregory, MA, RD

Dietician, Shands Hospital

"When I ask people what they had to eat the day before, I often don't see fruits and vegetables – I mean, sometimes none – but certainly much less than the five that are recommended."

Narrator

But getting five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables isn't as hard as you think. We're

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not talking about eating five apples a day or forcing down a full head of broccoli, but rather enjoying a variety of both fruits and veggies. For instance, a handful of blueberries on your cereal and a cup of orange juice. A banana for a snack. Half a cup of broccoli and half a cup of carrots with dinner. Or, if you prefer, you can have one big salad chock full of vegetables at lunch and get all your vegetables in one fell swoop.

In addition to fruits and vegetables, everyone should eat three or more servings of fat-free or low-fat dairy products per day to consume the recommended amount of calcium, vitamin D, magnesium and other nutrients. And six to eleven servings of whole grain breads and cereals – that means whole wheat, not white: whole grain pastas, brown rice and other whole grains. Ensuring that we eat enough fruits and vegetables and whole grains should also help us CONTROL OUR CHOLESTEROL LEVELS, in part by limiting the amount of bad fats we consume, and skewing our diet towards good fats. Good fats? Bad fats? Is there a difference? You bet.

The fats to avoid are the “saturated” ones, because they cause our blood cholesterol levels to rise the most. You can find them in animal products like meats, cheese and butter. Unsaturated fats, on the other hand, may actually help IMPROVE our cholesterol levels. These healthier fats are abundant in nuts, avocados, and fish.

John Cooke, MD **Cardiologist**

“I tell my patients to use more nuts in their diet. People who consume a handful of nuts a day have less risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Omega three fatty acids that we find in fish is very good for artery health, that’s the reason that I recommend more fish in the diet. Soy protein also contains many things that are useful for endothelial function. Argenene is one. There are many antioxidant vitamins in the fruits and vegetables that we eat. Fruits and vegetables are a great source of plant chemicals that reverse the aging process.”

Narrator

Fish is excellent source of another kind of fat, omega 3-fatty acids. You can find these futuristic sounding fats in salmon, sardines and other fatty fishes. On the flip side, nutritionists are now warning about other research showing that trans-fats, or trans fatty acids are created when manufactures turn liquid oils, into solids like stick margarine or shortening. Trans fats help lengthen the shelf life of baked goods, but they also reduce our good cholesterol and boost our bad.

Sue Friedman, RD **Nutritionist. Jackson Memorial Hospital**

"And it will use the term of hydrogenated oil of some kind and if you see it on the label of crackers or cookies or baked goods, that’s considered a trans-fatty acid."

Narrator

When you begin working good fats into your diet, remember that fats – whether good or bad – have more than twice as many calories as an equal amount of protein or

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carbohydrates. In the end, watching our portions, eating a wide range of foods, and monitoring the type and amount of fat in our diets should go a long way towards helping us with our third nutritional goal: MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT. People who are obese are more likely to develop heart disease, even if they have no other risk factors,

so how much we weigh matters.

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist, Jackson Memorial Hospital

"When somebody gains weight or becomes obese, what happens is they are at a much greater risk for chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, generally they have problems with their joints, they have problems walking, they have problems breathing, I mean it's a whole gamut of chronic diseases that are a result of too much body weight."

Narrator

But what happens when you already have high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes? What nutritional guidelines do the experts recommend for you? Stay tuned to find out.

Narrator

Limiting portion size, watching fats and eating a wide variety of foods can help keep anyone healthy, but people with high cholesterol, high blood pressure or heart disease need to take a few extra precautions in order to avoid a worsening in their health.

Perry Krichmar, MD

Cardiologist, S. Florida Cardiology Associates

"If you had a heart attack and let's assume you have high blood pressure, you're a diabetic and you had high cholesterol before your heart attack, and you don't change any of those parameters, after your heart attack, what do you think is going to happen again?"

Narrator

Kenneth Trojano knew HE needed to change his diet after he collapsed in his home and was diagnosed with heart failure. What caused his disease?

Kenneth Trojano, Patient

"Probably my sugar diabetes. Overweight. Worked awful hard all my life, I probably overworked myself."

Narrator

Once his heart failure was diagnosed, Kenneth began working even harder to get better.

Kenneth Trojano, Patient

"I don't eat a lot of meat, I eat a lot of chicken and fish, a lot of salad. I don't use butter, I use Pam. I eat egg beaters about once a week. I enjoy them and the cholesterol, you know,

no cholesterol."

Narrator

And because he has diabetes, Kenneth also has to watch his carbohydrates, especially refined carbohydrates like white bread, candy, cakes and sweets.

And while it hasn't always been easy... it's worked. Since he was diagnosed with heart failure, Kenneth has lost close to 55 pounds, and he's done it the right way ... by changing his lifestyle, not by experimenting with a fad diet.

Perry Krichmar, MD

Cardiologist, S. Florida Cardiology Associates

"Fad diets are not good for people with heart disease, nor are they good for anybody. We're not asking you to diet, we're asking you to change your lifestyle."

Narrator

For people who are overweight like Kenneth was, the loss of even a few pounds can help reduce blood pressure and blood cholesterol. And when obese people with Type 2 diabetes lose weight, they often experience a lowering of their blood glucose levels and are then able to decrease their insulin requirements or oral diabetes medications.

Kenneth Trojano, Patient

"I take two pills a day for sugar, see if we can knock that down to one. But I would have to lose probably another 20 pounds to do that."

Narrator

In the battle to lose weight and maintain a healthy heart, watching fats becomes even more important. While everyone should limit their saturated fat intake, the American Heart Association recommends that people with heart disease limit theirs still further – down from 10% of total calories to 7%.

Perry Krichmar, MD

Cardiologist, S. Florida Cardiology Associates

"We have to sort of reprogram a patient, this is the lifestyle behavior, so that includes what you put in your mouth and how you're preparing it."

Narrator

The fastest way to lower blood cholesterol is by losing weight, cutting out saturated fats and trans-fats, while increasing dietary fiber. In fact, the American Heart Association recommends 25-30 grams of fiber per day. Good sources of fiber include legumes, like lentils and black beans. Fruits and vegetables like brussel sprouts, apples and pears, and hot cereals like barley and oat bran.

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist, Jackson Memorial Hospital

"A lot of fruits and vegetables take longer to eat, you have to chew them, they have fiber,

they fill you up more so, those are things that you want to include. Plus they are generally lower in calories than some of the other food choices."

Narrator

Many of these foods also contain folate, also known as folic acid, a b-vitamin shown to reduce the level of some harmful substances in the blood that maybe related to coronary artery disease.

What other nutritional guidelines should people with heart disease follow? Well, according to the American Heart Association, limiting sodium is one of the most important things that people with hypertension or heart failure can do. In fact, most Americans eat ten to twenty times the amount of sodium they need. What's the problem with that? Sodium makes the body hold onto fluid and to pump that added fluid, the heart has to work harder than it should. So, for these people, physicians often recommend keeping salt intake below 2,000 milligrams per day. That's equivalent to about one teaspoon of salt.

Kenneth Trojano, Patient

"There's a café right next door and it's all home cooking. And I like that because I go in and when the guy cooks for me I tell him don't use salt and he won't use it so I enjoy that. Because the salt retains my weight, my congestive heart failure, I don't put salt on anything."

Narrator

Taking the salt shaker off the table, and cooking with salt-free herbs and seasonings instead of salt can be a great start, but be aware that many of us get MORE salt from processed "convenience" foods like frozen dinners, snacks, packaged meats, condiments and canned soups, than we do from our salt shakers.

Now what about caffeine? It may get you going in the morning, but it may cause cardiac rhythm disturbances and uncomfortable palpitations, so people with heart disease or others with known sensitivities to caffeine should limit their intake of caffeinated beverages like coffee, black tea and colas.

What about alcohol? Many studies have shown that a moderate amount of alcohol may actually have a proactive effect on the heart, but overindulging can cause harm. So, if you do choose to drink, the American Heart Association recommends you limit yourself to one drink a day if you're a woman, or two drinks a day if you're a man. A drink is one glass of beer or wine, or one mixed drink with an ounce of liquor. Folks with heart disease also need to be aware of their potassium intake. Many people with heart disease take a water pill or diuretic to help flush excess fluid from their bodies.

Perry Krichmar, MD

Cardiologist, S. Florida Cardiology Associates

"Most diuretics make you lose potassium, so if your potassium is running below normal,

you can certainly have palpitations or arrhythmia's, lethal arrhythmia's, or deadly arrhythmia's, and sometimes we can also get severe muscle weakness if your potassium is low enough."

Narrator

Doctors will sometimes prescribe potassium supplements or recommend their patients eat more potassium-rich foods like: dried fruits including raisins, prunes, apricots, and dates; fresh fruits such as bananas, strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe and oranges; fresh vegetables like beets, greens, spinach, peas, tomatoes and mushrooms; dried vegetables - including beans and peas; fresh juices such as orange or grapefruit; canned juices like grapefruit, prune and apricot; and fresh meats including turkey, fish and beef.

Narrator

Of course, many of these nutritional changes may be easier said than done. Stay tuned for some helpful tips on how to take it slow, while seeing fast results.

Narrator

By cutting down on fats, watching his carbohydrates and eating less, Kenneth Trojano has managed to lose 55 pounds, lower his cholesterol level, and keep his diabetes and heart disease in check. More remarkable than that? He hasn't particularly felt deprived.

Kenneth Trojano, Patient

"You can eat a lot more than you think you can on a diet basically. You can eat a lot of food, you just gotta watch what you eat."

Sue Friedman, RD

Nutritionist, Jackson Memorial Hospital

"It's more that if you can eat the proper portion, you can basically eat any kind of food."

Narrator

But not every one handles the lifestyle changes as gracefully.

Perry Krichmar, MD

Cardiologist, S. Florida Cardiology Associates

"If you're used to doing something for 20 years and all of a sudden you're not eating that macaroni and cheese anymore, and now all of sudden it's not in your behavior patterns anymore, that's going to be difficult."

Narrator

Of course, nobody should think they have to change all of their eating habits at once. What's important is to start making changes, one at a time, right away. Once you make

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small changes, bigger changes won't seem so difficult. And small changes CAN make a big difference. In fact, according to the experts, the higher a person's blood cholesterol level is, the bigger the difference these types of changes can make. For instance, a person who reduces their saturated fats below 7% and adds stanol margarine and high fiber foods to their diet can lower their cholesterol level by as much as 15 to 20% in as little as three weeks.

Patricia Gregory, MA, RD

Dietician, Shands Hospital

"I think by getting things into balance, we can really enjoy the pleasure of it a lot more. That's what it should be, food should be our pleasure, one of our pleasures."

Narrator

Food, fitness and fun ... it's not a bad prescription.