

The Principles of a
Balanced Diet
So You Can Choose



ALLISON TUFFS
Your Life Your Choice

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Introduction

My name is Allison. I am a Nutritionist, the kind with a Master and Bachelors of Science in Nutrition from the University of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, respectively.

After graduation I chose the community nutrition route, specifically, working with vulnerable people in the developing world with a focus on micronutrient malnutrition a.k.a deficiencies.

In the developing world I've seen adults and children alike suffering from malnutrition caused by a lack of access (physical or financial) to enough quality food. In contrast, in the developed world, Canada, USA, Australia, Austria, etc I see a large and growing number of people experiencing malnutrition and disease caused by eating too many calories from non-nutritious foods.

Research supports what I see. Poor eating behaviours coupled with limited exercise, due to our largely sedentary lives, has resulted in a global obesity epidemic.

To combat this epidemic, we all need to take responsibility for our food choices, to decide to eat better for today and for our future health. In response, I offer you 10 principles of a healthy lifestyle - 7 of which are based on a balanced diet. You see, I believe it's pretty tough to be truly happy if you aren't healthy and its tough to be healthy if you aren't eating well.

Some of you will say I'm perfectly happy with the food I eat, my life and my energy levels. Congratulations!! However, for most of us, including myself, eating better is something we can all work on.

Healthy eating in the form of a balanced diet is a significant part of a healthy lifestyle.

A balanced diet is - About food liberation, there are no prohibited foods. While all foods aren't created equally, all foods contain different nutrients, and they all contribute to your health.

A balanced diet is not - counting calories, fad diets, crash diets, taking a bunch of supplements, cutting out whole food groups (just because) and/or massively restricting caloric intake.



Why a Balanced Diet?

Food is many things to many people, but to all of us food is fuel for our brains, muscles and every cell in our bodies. Food is an enabler that helps us to live our lives by providing calories, vitamins and minerals, phytonutrients, carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. Without food, our bodies lack the energy required to meet our daily demands both - physically and mentally.

The choices you make in relation to the types of food and drink you consume and how they are prepared will have a direct impact on your physical and mental health, your energy levels, and your ability to make decisions.

A balanced diet loaded with whole real foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, bean and legumes, nuts and seeds, and animal products combined in the right percentages (complex carbohydrates, fats, proteins) will positively impact on your health, energy levels and your ability to manage stress, or not.

I believe your food choices dramatically affect how you handle your life in terms of the energy you have, the decisions you make and your overall health. That's why a balanced diet is so important! And that's why we're talking about it here.

The motto I live my life by is "It's not a diet, it's a lifestyle." The choices you and I make each day determine the quality of our lives, it's up to us. We are free to choose. Choose well!

So without further ado, let's move on to an introduction of the 10 principles of a healthy lifestyle.



10 Principles Of A Healthy Lifestyle:

Principle 1: Eat a wide variety of whole real foods and minimally processed foods.

Why?

- Processed foods have by definition been processed and have had the important nutrients your body needs for cellular function removed. If the food is fortified, that means some of the vitamins and minerals have been added back in because the food and agricultural arm of the government have identified the population as a whole is deficient in this particular nutrient. Icks, I prefer for all of us to get our nutrients from natural foods.

What are whole real foods?

- Anything that comes from the ground to your table with minimal handling for example, fresh fruits and vegetables, bean and legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Foods that are free of added fat, sugar and salt and are loaded with dietary fiber, natural sugars, minerals.

What are processed foods?

- White flour, sugar, pasta, cakes, cookies, fast food, donuts, sausages, pre-packaged foods, breakfast cereals, etc.



Principle 2: Portion control- size matters

Why?

- Today, we have a distorted perception of what a portion should be. This has largely occurred due to the advent of simplicity created by fast food establishments and our love of dining out. Restaurants and fast food joints want our return business and so the portions have over time gotten larger and larger. Super sizing is a way of life from 7-11 to McDonalds to higher end dining experiences the bigger the serve the better we feel. Psychologically we all want value for our money and who doesn't feel they got their money's worth when they are stuffed after a meal?

How can I reduce my portions?

- A simple trick when dining at home is to use smaller plates – we eat with our eyes, when we see a full plate our brains are happy. The brain doesn't distinguish between a 4 inch and a 10 inch plate.
- When dining out share a meal, it's more cost effective and you'll feel just as satisfied afterwards. If dining alone, put half the food off to the side and ask for the rest to be package to take home.

Principle 3 - Drink water instead of fruit juice, fruit drink or soda pop

Why?

- Water is required by every living cell in your body; in fact approximately 70% of the body is comprised of water. If you are drinking water for your meals you are hydrating your cells, which will help you feel better, and you are avoiding a large number of additional calories in your daily caloric intake.
- Fruit juice is one of the culprits of massive weight gain in children. All you need is 4 oz of orange juice to get your daily vitamin C requirement. After that every ounce is extra calories and sugar that your body doesn't need.
- Fruit drinks have added sugar, something that isn't going to add to your nutritional status, but maybe to your waist line and health status.

How much water should I drink a day?

- 8-10 glasses of water a day is what you should aim for. Ideally have a glass of water before each meal or snack to help you feel fuller and to keep your body hydrated.



Principle 4: Ramp up the dietary fiber

Why?

- Eating foods high in dietary fiber helps to keep you feeling full longer, adds bulk to your stools (which believe it or not is a very good thing), aids in lowering cholesterol by absorbing bile and helps to reduce your risk of developing diseases like metabolic disorders, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

What foods are high in dietary fiber?

- All foods listed under principal 1 are great sources of dietary fiber. Some are higher than others like beans, all bran cereal and chia seeds, but the objective is to eat a wide variety of whole foods and minimally processed foods, not just to focus in on a few.



What foods are low in dietary fiber?

- Most commercial cereals, fast food, white bread, pasta, meat, poultry and fish.

Principle 5: Learn to cook

- This is one of my favorite things. Roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty and start to create. Whether cooking for yourself or for friends and family you can create simple dishes that are loaded with nutrients from simple ingredients.

What should I cook?

- I love watching food network, Barefoot Contessa and Chopped as there are lots of great recipe ideas. Feel free to modify the recipes, that's half the fun.
- I also love to juice as I control the additives, the sugar content from the fruits and vegetables I choose and it's a quick and easy way to get more nutrients –though not the dietary fiber.



Principle 6: Your plate should look like a rainbow

- Choose a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables the deeper the hue the better add beets, carrots, orange sweet potato, peppers (green, yellow, and orange) sweet green peas, and tomatoes for added color and nutrients to your meals.
- Aim to eat at least two different vegetables at lunch and dinner. A salad or cut up vegetables as a snack is a great way to get additional veggies.

Principle 7: Minimized your sugar intake.

- By cooking your own desserts you can control the sugar or at least know how much sugar you are using. Pop and fruit drinks are two of the worst culprits for adding sugar to our diets, reduce your consumption and you're body and teeth will be thanking you.
- Use natural sugar substitutes like Agava, Molasses, Stevia to name a few
- Word of caution here minimizing sugar doesn't mean drink diet drinks. Better to have the sugar drink than a diet drink, better yet drink water.

Principle 8: Exercise - get moving

Why?

- Exercise releases feel good endorphins, speeds up your metabolism and helps you to keep your range of motion.

How much and how often?

- A daily walk is never going to hurt you, maybe its walking to work or parking a little further away.
- 30 minutes of exercise that raises your heart rate at least 3 times a week is recommended.
- Do some weight bearing exercise to keep your bones and muscles strong ie. Yoga, weights, throwing kids around, get creative with your exercise you don't need to go to the gym.



Principle 9: Look at the world through the glass is half full

Why?

- Research conclusively shows that people who have a more positive/optimistic outlook on life are healthier.
- Life is too short to focus on the negative.
- The blame game is just no fun.

Principle 10: Balance - body, mind and spirit

Why?

We need to recharge our bodies and our minds and the best way to do this is to be in touch with our inner selves to know when we need to time out and turn inwards.

How often?

As often as need be. Slow down, smell the flowers, stop multitasking and enjoy the moment for the moment. Sounds simple. It's not, but it's worth practicing.

* * *



The Principles of a Balanced Diet - So You Can Choose

Principles 8-10 are outside the discussion of a healthy diet, but are integral in a healthy lifestyle. Here's the thing, you can eat most balanced diet in the world but without exercise and attention to your mental health you are at greater risk of diseases of the mind and body. For easy reference there is a fridge reminder that you can cut out and put on your fridge located on page 9 of this guide.

Most of us can afford to clean up our food behaviours a little. I hope this guide has helped you to decide which tenants you should be paying a little or a lot more attention to.

Rome wasn't built in a day nor is a balanced diet. It takes time and conscious choices. I challenge you to starting today, right now, to swap one processed food for a healthier food choice. Start today and slowly make sustainable changes, changes that are here to stay commit to a healthier diet and you're half way to a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. Vow to leave behind any negative limiting beliefs you have about your food behaviours, accept any stumbles with an attitude of self-love, self-forgiveness, just pick yourself up, forgive and move toward your goals.

I leave you with a parting thought on diets, remembering "It's not a diet, it's a lifestyle."

Diet Stands for:

D - determine what you want your life to be -"ask"

I - imagine your healthy body and inform yourself- "believe"

E - empowerment and entitlement- you deserve to be healthy

T - terms of your life. The hardest part is deciding, once you do you make a contract with yourself to eat a balanced diet and commit to the 10 principles of a healthy lifestyle.

I promise if you commit to the 10 principles of a healthy lifestyle you will be happier, healthier and have more energy.



What's next?

I wrote this guide to help you understand the basics, of a balanced diet and lifestyle, so you can make the choices that are right for you to attain the health and wellness you deserve and desire. I really want to know your most burning questions about what we talked about here today. Please click the ask Allison tab at www.Allisontuffs.com. to ask your questions.

Alternatively, I invite you to this week to follow the first 7 principles and share your story about what was most the challenging, confusing or difficult aspect of doing so. Click the share your story tab or ask tab at www.Allisontuffs.com.

I look forward to staying connected share on social networks and through e-mail. Please feel free to share my page with friends and family, after all, a healthy lifestyle is so much more fun when shared with those you love.



10 Principles Of A Healthy Lifestyle:

Principle 1

Eat a wide variety of whole real foods and minimally processed Foods.

Principle 2

Portion control- size matters

Principle 3

Drink water - instead of fruit juice, fruit drink or soda pop

Principle 4

Ramp up the dietary fiber

Principle 5

Learn to cook

Principle 6

Your plate should look like a rainbow.

Principle 7

Minimized your sugar intake.

Principle 8

Exercise - get moving.

Principle 9

Look at the world through the glass is half full.

Principle 10

Balance - body, mind and spirit

“It’s not a diet, it’s a lifestyle.”

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Fridge Reminder

