



Nutritious
& Delicious

HEALTH MATTERS!



WITH **GARY BAVERSTOCK**
NUTRITIONAL THERAPIST

The Secret of Eating Well

Introduction

We all want to eat well and to be healthy, but are often confused by mixed messages from the government, self promoted 'health gurus' and Insta-nutritionists, fad diets and superfood crazes from the internet – often a source of unreliable information. I believe the 'Secret of Eating Well' comes from viewing food as being functional, rather than it just being about pleasure. Sure food is there it be enjoyed and loved, but when you understand the role of food / nutrients in the body and what happens when you don't get enough of them, it gives you an appreciation on the importance of getting the right nutrition a good percentage of the time.

Stabilise your blood sugar levels: Carbohydrates contain sugars, which are released into the blood once digested in the form of glucose – the body's main source of energy. The body needs to regulate levels within strict limits to maintain health and energy, but this can easily become imbalanced. When blood sugar is low energy levels will dip and the body will stimulate a feeling of hunger / craving for sweet foods. When it is high, it may slow down your circulation and the body will store the excess glucose as fat. **TIP: Never get too hungry! Eat a healthy low sugar breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus healthy snacks in between (if necessary), and avoid stimulants to keep your levels stable. Go for Complex Carbohydrates for slow release energy!**

Choose complex carbohydrates: Carbohydrates are an important source of energy. Also known as dietary starch/fibre, complex carbohydrates are high in vitamins, minerals and plant chemicals that support health and wellbeing. Simple/refined carbs only provide energy. They also provide excellent levels of fibre that promotes gut health and slows down absorption. The reason wholegrains are so good is that they contain the bran, germ and endosperm of the plant so you get all of the nutrients they can offer. **Tip: choose green vegetables, wholegrains like oats, quinoa & amaranth, starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes & corn, and pulses like beans, lentils & peas.**

Eat protein with every meal and snack: Protein is absolutely essential for the body to grow and repair, as it forms enzymes, antibodies, hormones, hair, nail, bone, teeth, haemoglobin (blood protein), neurotransmitters (serotonin and adrenaline) and skin etc. It also keeps you feeling fuller for longer, keeping hunger pangs at bay and can stabilise blood sugar – leaving you less tempted to snack on sweet foods. **Tip: Make fish, poultry and eggs your primary sources of protein. Soya, Quorn, pulses and nuts are also good sources, especially for those on vegetarian or vegan diets. Avoid using dairy foods as the main source, as they are generally higher in fat.**

Don't be afraid of fat – eat the essentials! Good fats are essential for the body to function well, as they surround every cell in our body. Omega 3 and 6 are essential fats, which need to be included in the diet. Omega 3 supplies us with EPA & DHA (important chemicals) that are crucial for brain function, vision and counteracting inflammation. Good sources of omega 3 fats are found in oily fish and also in flaxseeds (linseeds), walnuts and their cold pressed oils. It is believed that our diets contain enough omega 6, but sources include poultry, eggs, avocados, some nuts, vegetable and seed oils. **TIP: Eat nuts & seeds raw and avoid cooking with omega 3 oils as they are easily damaged by heat. Include at least 2-3 portions of oily fish in your diet weekly. Think SMASHT! – Salmon, Mackerel, Anchovy, Sardines, Herring, Tuna (fresh). Avoid seed oils!**

Saturated fats? - A word on saturated fats: Saturated fats are beneficial in small amounts. They are present in every cell membrane and can help to support liver function, immunity and hormone production. Yes, they still can promote high cholesterol, especially when eaten in large amounts, but it is important to highlight the good saturated fats. Virgin Coconut Oil, Duck fat, Ghee and Butter all have health benefits (butter and coconut have good nutrient profiles). **TIP: No fat should be used in large amounts, avoid margarines and spreads and especially bad fats like trans, or hydrogenated.**

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Eat at least 7 portions of vegetables and fruit every day: Vegetables and fresh fruits should be the nutritional cornerstone of every diet. A portion (80g) is approximately equivalent to a small, cored apple, or what can fit into the palm of your hand. Vegetables and fruit are amazing sources of vitamins, minerals, fibre and plant chemicals that help regulate all bodily processes and promote health. Try to include some raw plant foods for added variety and optimum nutrition. Aim for 75% vegetables and 25% fruit. **TIP: Add extra vegetables to stews, salads and soups to easily achieve your 7 a Day. Make one main meal with ½ a plate of vegetables, by increasing salads or steamed veggies. Pulses & juices do count, but only as one portion – whatever you eat. Potatoes do not count!**

Bulk up on your fibre! Food should have character and substance, and offer some resistance when you eat it. Whole foods and whole grains have much, much more roughage than their white processed counterparts and are high in nutrients like B vitamins, which we need for energy production and stress control. Pulses are some of the healthiest carbohydrates you can eat - they provide energy to your muscle cells and brain many hours after a meal, and they are loaded with soluble fibre that keeps your gut healthy and populated by beneficial bacteria. Fibre also helps to slow digestion and lower cholesterol / fat absorption. **TIP: Increase the fibre content of your diet by choosing wholegrains like brown rice, barley, quinoa, rye, oats and millet, and eat your 7 a day!**

Stay hydrated with water! Our body is made up of 50-75% water. As the primary fluid in the body, water serves as a solvent for minerals & vitamins and plays a key role in the digestion, absorption, transportation and use of nutrients. Water is the medium for the safe elimination of toxins and waste products and whole-body thermoregulation is critically dependent on it. There is no system in the body that does not depend on water. **TIP: We metabolise some water from the foods we eat – as long as your diet contains a lot of fruit and vegetables. Sip water throughout the day and aim for up to 1.5ltrs per day. It is best not obtained from fruit juices, tea or coffee. Only water hydrates, cleans and detoxifies like water.**

Eat less salt! - Salt can be very dangerous! (sodium x 2.5 = salt amount). The upper limit for adults is 6g a day (a teaspoon – not in one go...!) Most people don't know how much they are having and go over this amount, often up to 15g/daily. Eating too much salt increases the risk of high blood pressure, even in young people. High blood pressure leads to poor heart and circulatory health. You can survive on as little as 1.5g/daily. Tip: Avoid **Red (High)**, traffic light salt rated foods and choose mainly **Green (Low)**, or the occasional **Amber (Medium)**. **Foods like breads and cereals may not taste salty, but can be packed with sodium. Labels promising "reduced sodium" or "unsalted" may contain more than you need.**

Reduce stimulants: Stimulants such as caffeine in coffee and especially in Red Bull – consumed for an energy boost – actually have the opposite effect giving you a false energy rush, followed by a corresponding dip. This will actually leave you lacking energy and looking for your next caffeine 'fix'. It is often damaging if consumed in high quantities. **TIP: Ideally don't drink coffee or black tea, especially first thing, but if you do, keep it to one / two cups a day and on a full stomach. Choose decaf coffees & herbal teas as healthier options.**

Say no to processed foods! Processed foods are to blame for the sharp rise in obesity levels and chronic disease, because they are often low in the nutrients, fibre, and beneficial fats essential to health, but high in calories, fats, sugars and salt. Furthermore, they generally contain compounds that rob the body of essential nutrients and are damaging to health, like trans fats. **TIP: Read the labels to avoid these products, if you don't understand what it is – then it's likely to be bad for you! Identify healthier pre-prepared foods that are low in salt, sugars and fats. Cook in bulk and freeze for quick and easy meals when pressed for time.**

Please Note: This handout should only be used as a guide to help inform you as to the diet and lifestyle modifications to support a healthy diet. If you think you may need help with your diet contact a qualified nutritionist.