

BioBites: The Power of Food & The Mythology of Aging

October 5, 2021

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Wellness and You

Presentation

Aging Myths. There are several myths that circulate and undermine the direct correlation between health and lifestyle factors. One myth is that the health issues that arise with age are attributable to age, and there is nothing that can be done other than to take medicine. Another myth is that heart disease and cancer are among the leading causes of death. Dr. David Katz, Head of Nutrition at Yale University, has shown that poor eating and lifestyle habits (unmanaged stress, lack of exercise, smoking) are actual causes of death. Heart disease, cancer, and other commonly perceived causes are the effects of unmanaged lifestyle issues. A third myth is that older people have weakened immune systems. This is not necessarily true. An immune system will become weakened by unmanaged stress or an inadequate diet. Nutrient-rich foods support the microbiome, which plays a pivotal role in the healthy functioning of the immune system; and supplements can further support the immune system, as needed.

Food is powerful. Food choices can be life-changing. The impact that non-industrial foods and organic foods can have on the body is significant and can transform the body's biochemistry and expression of health at any age.. Beyond eliminating toxins and chemicals that can cause harm, organic whole foods often provide a steadier form of energy, natural fiber, and an abundance of nutrients to the body. The impact that consuming more whole foods and organic foods has is often quickly perceived and significant.

How & What to Eat. There are so many healthy foods to choose from; choose foods you like. Fresh, local whole foods are the optimal choice. Get plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and whole grains; and eat seafood, clean meat (antibiotic- and added hormone-free), tofu, etc. Prioritize clean foods, eat a variety of colors, and eat enough but not too much. Eating at the table is the best way to eat enough but not too much, as it allows you to be mindful of your eating. Follow the 90:10 rule. Aim for 90% simple, whole foods, and relax with the remaining 10% - don't try to be perfect.

The Process for Nutritious Eating. Find a planning and shopping process that works for you and your schedule. Many businesses are now offering options that are more flexible for consumers. Find a prep work routine that fits your needs. You may find tools that you enjoy working with or certain foods that you can use several times in a week, for example. Make the experience of eating a conscious one, not just a chore that you get through; try to sit down at a table to eat. Allow yourself to digest. A good rule to live by is to stop eating 3 hours before you go to bed. When you get these elements down - planning and shopping, prep work, sit down to eat, and digest - things become much easier.

The Five Pillars of Health. The Five Pillars of wellness include food, movement, rest, social connection, and purpose. All five are impacted by stress. Our ability to focus on our diet and to digest properly is affected by stress, for example; and therefore, it's important we find ways to effectively manage stress. Food is essential, as discussed. Movement is imperative; our bodies were designed to move. Find something you love to do and do it often so that your body can continue to move well into your 80s and 90s and beyond. Sleep is a critically important time for

restoration; it's when we shed unneeded cells, the digestive system processes nutrients and waste and prepares for evacuation, and muscles undergo a period of rest. The body undertakes all its repair work when we're sleeping. Managing stress to enjoy a peaceful night's sleep will reward you in numerous ways, when it comes to health. Social connection is important, too. Studies have shown that isolation and loneliness are among the major causes of health issues, as damaging as smoking. If you have been feeling isolated, please find new ways to connect. One of the ways you may reconnect is to discover a purpose, the fifth of the Five Pillars. What gets you out of bed in the morning? What longing do you have that you wish to pursue? Go get it and enjoy the energy you gain from it.

Action Planning. Be simple as you prepare a plan of action. Do not allow this to become complicated. Consider breaking your action plan down into pieces. Which of the Five Pillars is most in need of attention in your life right now?

Q&A Synopsis

Do you have any nutritional strategies you can recommend for someone with ADHD, low blood sugar, and seasonal allergies? [Assuming the ADHD is a medical diagnosis] all the research around ADHD suggests that diet does matter. Simple whole foods are best. Highly processed, highly dyed foods (food coloring), food additives will negatively impact the microbiome, which results from our diet and other lifestyle factors (taking antibiotics, etc.). We want to have a healthy microbiome because that impacts the immune system as well as mood and neurological/cognitive function. The person I regard as an expert in researching ADHD and autism is Dr. Barry Sears; he highly recommends therapeutic doses of fish oil. If you are interested in looking further into remedies above and beyond simple whole foods, foods free of additives and dyes, check out Dr. Sears who has some very good research on that topic. As for seasonal allergies, sometimes herbs like stinging nettle tea can be helpful. Stress also impacts the immune system and makes it over active, so work on your stress if you are having problems with seasonal allergies. If you're sensitive to mold and other environmental issues, you may need to stay out of the woods in autumn. Low blood sugar can be impacted and remedied with regular meals. Grazing creates a lot of problems with low blood sugar and insulin dysregulation. When you're constantly snacking on something and not having a full-on meal, your insulin is constantly trying to adjust to what you're taking in and can become dysregulated. Do your best to eat three meals, making sure you have protein in them as well as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in most. Some people prefer two meals a day; just make sure they're substantial and adequate. For foods good at stabilizing blood sugar levels by providing slow energy, look to apples, berries, other fruits and vegetables and quinoa, among others. Avoid simple carbohydrates that cause blood sugar levels to shoot up quickly, which triggers the body to respond with insulin and results in an abrupt crash in a short amount of time.

Can you briefly elaborate on sugars in fruits and other whole foods versus refined sugars. Sugars that are components of fruits and other whole foods are part of a whole - the fructose is embedded in layers of digestive fiber vitamins, and minerals. Conversely, simple sugars tend to be paired with white flour, which converts to simple sugar. You may find few nutrients in products that contain simple sugars. The body takes these in and processes them very differently.

Would you recommend a continuous glucose monitor to learn which foods are affecting us? If you want to deeply understand your body, you may wish to; but I would say that for me, I would need to be symptomatic to choose a glucose monitor. You might also pay keen attention to how

you feel - energy levels, side effects, hunger levels - with particular foods. We are the best detectives when it comes to our health; we know whether something is working well or needs further exploration by outside sources.

Are any artificial sweeteners good? What about stevia? It is my personal recommendation that we avoid artificial sweeteners, including stevia. The brain detects these sweeteners and initiates a cycle, prompting the body to produce more insulin; and when the body deduces that there are no calories in these sweeteners, it increases its appetite for sugar. This cycle encourages insulin production, which can contribute to insulin resistance.

Is fasting good for you? There are various ways of fasting. The most typical fasting regimen is to take a certain number of hours in a 24-hour cycle and to limit eating to that number of hours. Some people will eat, for example, between 10am and 6pm; nothing outside of that. Others eat within a 12-hour cycle. And many have experienced positive results with this type of fasting. It doesn't work for everyone, but it may be worth experimenting with. There have been positive results with blood sugar, focus, energy, and sleep for people who fast. I haven't seen great results for people who do all-day fasting several days per week. That said, it's your body; experiment in a way that makes sense for you and observe it. See what comes out as positive for you and stay with it.

Is farm-raised fish less nutritious than wild caught fish? It can be. The hazard with farm-raised fish pertains to contaminants in the food. If you can find a farm-raise company with very good practices, you're probably ok.

Do you know of any easy to use apps to track consumption of vitamins and minerals? I don't, but there are some good testing companies that people have access to today. Grassrootshealth.net is one of them; they focus on Vitamin D. Participants also offered Cronometer and Vessel.

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