

HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVITY COMBATS

AGING AND DISEASE

Part I

What is healthy eating? It is a practice of making choices of what and how much to eat. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) describes healthy eating plan as the one that:

- Emphasizes variety of fruits and vegetables – 5-9 per day (of roughly equal number of each based on caloric requirements), whole grains (wheat, bulgur, oats, brown rice, etc.), low fat or fat free milk or yoghurt (2-3 cups/day), other milk products, and soymilk.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish (including salmon), eggs (limit 2-3 per week), legumes-nuts and dry beans and peas.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol and includes poly and mono unsaturated oils (corn, olive, canola, soybean, etc.).
- Is low in salt (sodium) and added sugars (diabetic sugar substitutes with no calories and carbohydrates are NutraSweet or aspartame, Sweet-N-Low or saccharin, and Splenda or sucralose).
- Includes 4-6 glasses of water daily, and other liquids, such as tea, coffee, or fruit juice. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting juices to 8 oz for children under 8 years of age and 12 oz for older children and teenagers. A fresh fruit contains more fiber and possibly less sugar than juice if it is added to sweeten it. Chewing a fruit also strengthens the teeth and the gums and is good for mastication.

USDA Dietary Guidelines and my Pyramid is not a therapeutic diet for a specific health condition. Individuals with chronic health condition should consult with a health care provider or a nutritionist/dietitian to determine what dietary pattern is appropriate for them.

Hopefully you have seen the “5 A Day the Color Way” signs on the produce displays of supermarkets. Eat your colors every day and stay healthy and fit; fight common cold and flu. Even serious diseases such as cancer, heart

disease, diabetes, obesity, and mental illness can be prevented or controlled. Colorful fruits and vegetables provide the wide range of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals to maintain a normal biochemistry, to stay fit and energetic. They provide antioxidants that protect skin, collagen and elastic tissue and fight destructive cells...

What is the “5 A Day the Color Way?”

The “5 A Day...” for the better health is a national program to encourage all Americans to eat 5 to 9 portions of fruits and vegetable every day – in roughly equal numbers. This program is sponsored by both the National Cancer Institute and the Produce for Better Health Foundation in partnership, and is supported by all National Health Authorities.

1. Red – fruits and vegetables that contain lycopene and anthocyanine, which are health promoting. This includes fruits such as cherries, watermelon, red grapes, red apples, pomegranates, and strawberries. It also includes vegetables such as beets, red peppers, tomatoes, radishes, red onions, rhubarb, etc.

2. Blue/purple – fruits and vegetables that contain phenolics and anthocyanine, which have anti-aging effect. This includes fruits such as black and blue berries, prune/plums, purple grapes, purple figs, raisins. Vegetables included are purple cabbage, eggplant, purple carrots and peppers, belgion endive, etc.

3. Green – fruits and vegetables that contain luteins and antioxidants, which improve vision health, strong bones and teeth. This includes fruits such as green grapes, kiwi, green apples, honeydew, and green pears. It also includes vegetables such as broccoli, brussel sprouts, spinach, green cabbage, green olives, etc.

4. Yellow/orange – fruits and vegetables that contain antioxidants such as vitamin C, carotenoids, bioflavonoids, which in addition help vision health and healthy immune system. This includes fruits such as oranges, grapefruit, pineapple, papaya, peaches, and apricots. It includes vegetables such as carrots, pumpkin, yellow squash, sweet corn, yellow peppers, etc.

5. White – fruits and vegetables that contain phytochemicals, which in addition control cholesterol levels. This includes fruits such as bananas, white dates, white nectarines, and white peaches. It also includes vegetables such as cauliflower, garlic, onions, white mushrooms, turnips, white corn, etc.

In summary healthy eating includes a balanced eating of whole grain carbohydrates, lean proteins, more vegetable oils and less animal fats, plain water, and “5 to 9” portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables which are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants. Coupled with at least 30 minutes of activity per day five times per week, such as walking, this regimen will go a long way in combating aging and diseases.

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This is Part I of two articles on health. Part II will follow in the next issue entitled “Weight Control and Activity Combats Disease and Obesity.”

The Armenian American Health Professional Organization (AAHPO) represents a growing group of health professionals dedicated to addressing the health related needs of the Armenian community. More information will soon be available on our web site, AAHPO.org, which is now under development.