

SESSION 5 - NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS

This is very important! **All foods can be part of a healthy diet!** That's right! All foods! There is no such thing as a bad food. Some foods will prevent you from getting to your goal as fast as you want to, but that doesn't mean it's a bad food, or bad for you, given certain considerations. But you have to be selective. You have to do a little more thinking about what you're eating.

You do need to know about what makes foods higher in calories so that you can better understand what foods to cut down on and which ones to eat more of. This isn't really that complicated, and you probably know a lot of this already. But it doesn't hurt to review some basics. After all, the more you know about what you are eating, the better able you are to make healthier food choices, and that is what this whole program is all about.....making better choices!

All foods are composed of one or more of six types of nutrients. These are protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins, minerals and water. Protein, carbohydrate and fat - all of these furnish calories. Vitamins, minerals and water do not.

1. Protein. Protein is vital to all living cells, and it helps to build and repair your body. Protein is the chemical building blocks that your body uses to make skin, tissue, muscle, blood, bones. We also need protein to make the enzymes we need to burn the fat. You just gotta have it! And it's found in various foods.

Now don't get the idea that any one food is all protein or all carbohydrate or all fat for that matter...most foods contain more than one of these nutrients. So foods that are high in protein, may also contain some carbohydrates and even some fat, but protein dense foods, will contain more protein than the others.

2. Carbohydrates provide your primary energy source. There are two types of carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates sometimes called concentrated sugars....and....complex carbohydrates, sometimes referred to as starches.

Some sugars contain nutrients and others don't. If you think about for just a minute, I'll bet you already know what I'm going to say. You know for example that soda pop has sugar in it right? Now what do you think, does it have any nutritional value? Of course not! But, what about orange juice? You know that fruit has natural sugar in it, but it's also 'loaded' with nutrients. The difference is the amount of nutrients you're getting for the calories you're taking in.

3. Complex carbohydrates are the starches. Foods like bread, potatoes, rice and pasta are good examples of foods that have a lot of starch. Now remember what I said a few minutes ago....most foods contain several nutrients. So don't assume that bread and rice only have starch in them and nothing else. Keep remembering that foods are composed of various nutrients, not just one. Even though they may be heavy in one or the other, they are still combinations of several nutrients.

Many people classify the carbohydrates based on their being simple,... such as sugars...or complex...like the starches and fibers. From a dieter's standpoint however, it may be more advantageous to categorize carbohydrates as refined....like sugar and starch...or unrefined, which are largely fiber.

4. Fiber! Fiber! Fiber! There's quite a lot written and discussed about fiber these days. You may have heard that fiber plays an important part in a diet plan, and that most of us don't get enough fiber. But do you really know what fiber is and why it's so important?

Fiber is also called roughage...residue or bulk. It is found only in fruits, vegetables and whole grain products and consists of the indigestible parts of cell walls that form the plant skeletons. (Sounds icky....but good for you) the chief function of fiber is to help rid the body of wastes and to help liberate essential fatty acids that help lower cholesterol levels.

Fiber not only helps carry off wastes but also excess fats, sugars, and starches. Increasing the fiber in your diet will also help to regulate blood sugar levels....maintain healthy function of your stomach and intestines and control serum cholesterol levels. It also helps you feel full and cuts the hunger. Sounds like a pretty terrific food right? It is when used with your complete diet. You get fiber from almost all summer fruits and vegetable, nuts, legumes and whole grain breads. Ok...let's go eat a carrot!

5. Fat. Fat is not all bad. It does provide some nutrients, and a little makes food more satisfying. We need some fat every day. The problem is, most of us eat way too much.

Fat furnishes many more calories than carbohydrates and protein. Protein and carbohydrates, for example, each contain four calories per gram, while fat contains nine calories per gram. What's a gram? Well it's a unit of weight measurement. In other words, fat has more than twice as many calories as protein and carbohydrates. If we reduce our intake of fat, we reduce our calorie intake. And that's the name of the game right?

You haven't heard us say 'eat' less have you? Fact of the matter is, many times when people reduce their intake of fat, they can actually eat more food than they were eating before. Remember the marbles are exactly the same size. You're eating just as much food, but now, it's nutrient dense. How's that for an eating plan, eat more and lose weight?

Where does fat come from? Fat sources include margarine, butter and vegetable oils, such as olive, canola, soy bean, corn, safflower and cotton seed, to name a few. Shortening is another fat source. Nuts and seeds are also rich in fat. And so are salad dressings, unless they are one of the fat free versions. Now when we

talk about calorie dense foods, these guys are the granddads of all time. Loads of calories for a fairly small amount of food. It's time to know what you're eating.

Sometimes fat exists where you don't expect it. It kind of hides on you. This is why the more knowledge you gain about what's in the foods you eat, the more ammunition you have to control what you eat. You need to know where fat and calories might be hiding. Which foods are nutrient dense and which foods are calorie dense. Now you can start to eat more nutrient dense foods, and less of the calorie dense foods. Because now you know which is which.

6. Vitamins, minerals and water. Water is the easy one, so let's start there. You probably already know that water is the one of the most important substances on our planet. After all, our world is nearly 70 % water, and so are we by the way, which ought to tell you just how important water is to us. But did you know that water is a nutrient? It is.

Your body needs water to help regulate its temperature. Water is involved in building new body tissue, and breaking down foods for the body to use. It is considered the most essential of all nutrients and the major constituent of all living cells.

So what are vitamins? They come in little bottles and look like Fred Flintstone, right? Well those are artificial vitamins, and not the kind we're talking about. Vitamins are organic substances, found in foods, which are necessary for good health and to perform specific functions in our bodies. Now if you didn't like that definition, then remember this....vitamins are good for you. You need them. That's all you need to know. And best of all they don't have any calories. But like the other nutrients, they are present in most food.

Exercise:

1. Name specific foods, especially those that might be hard to figure out whether they are nutrient dense or calorie dense and research its nutrient values. A good place to look is in your online food journal. It has multiple listings of foods and their nutrient base. An example would be avocados, almonds, peanut butter, etc.

What are the pros and cons of each food?

2. List where fat hides, especially in flavorings such as high fructose syrups etc., and how you might eliminate or limit your exposure to them.