

## Spring Clean Your Diet

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My good friend Andy Klein, DC, MS, DACBSP (the official American chiropractor for the 2000 Sydney, Olympic games) called me the other night and explained that he was drinking his phytochemicals in the form of red wine and catching up on his reading. He told me he had just listened to a lecture in which the speaker said it was politically incorrect to say that a glass of red wine was healthy. He knew that I didn't drink, but asked my opinion.

Based on the literature, moderate amounts of alcohol, especially red wine, contain phytochemicals that are powerful antioxidants. I told Andy that adding a glass of red wine a day to the standard American diet would improve the health of most people, because they do not consume enough fruits and vegetables. I did not feel that the wine would have much of an effect for persons who consume 10 or more servings of fruits or vegetables per day. Andy started to laugh and said that only a nutcase like myself could pull that off, unless French fries and the piece of lettuce on his burger counted as a serving or two.

This got me thinking. It really is not hard to clean up the average diet. The following program is aimed at the average person. It does not take into consideration people with special needs, diseases, food allergies or food hypersensitivities. Feel free to save the information below to give to your patients.

### The Standard American Diet

The standard American diet (SAD) contains too many calories; too many simple carbohydrates (sugars); too much fat (especially saturated fat); too much processed food, and too many chemicals (preservatives, colorings, stabilizers and other additives) that have no nutritional value. This diet helps contribute to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and a host of other disorders.

The rate of these diseases can be slowed - even reversed - by eating more fruits; vegetables; legumes (beans); unprocessed grains; and by drinking more pure water. When a person eats more "good" food, they ingest more vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fiber. These substances are good for the cardiovascular system; the immune system; the neuromusculoskeletal system; and the gastrointestinal system. Junk food (sodas; fruit drinks; fried foods; most fast foods; chips; doughnuts; ice cream; cookies; desserts; etc.) and processed meats (hot dogs; pepperoni; salami; sausage; bacon) add empty calories, little fiber, artery-clogging fat, simple sugars, and a host of unwanted chemicals. These foods can contribute to the diseases mentioned above.

### Improving the SAD Diet

There are 21 chances per week (seven breakfasts, lunches and dinners) plus snacks to give your body fuel. For breakfast, eat a high-fiber hot or cold cereal. If you need sweetener, make sure to measure carefully and not liberally pour. Nonfat milk, soy milk or protein powder are optional, depending on your level of activity and weight loss concerns. Add the optional calories for high activity, and skip them if you need to lose weight.

For lunches and dinners, eat seven vegetable-based meals and seven animal-protein-based meals.

Thus, either for lunch or dinner each day eat a vegetable-based meal, such as a large salad. This should consist of a dark green with four to five colors of vegetables and one legume (pinto; kidney; black; white; red; garbanzo; navy; lentils; or soy). Use a spoonful or two of olive or canola-oil-based dressing. If that is not enough flavor, you can add vinegar or very-low-calorie dressings to suit your taste. Other options for your vegetable meal would be a large plate of steamed vegetables (again, shoot for at least five colors) or a bowl of vegetable soup. People who are highly active and are not trying to lose weight may want to add a side dish of protein, such as nonfat cottage cheese, fish, chicken or turkey.

For the seven animal-protein-based-meals, I prefer fish, chicken or turkey with a nonstarch vegetable side dish. For people with high activity or growth with no weight loss, starches such as pasta, potatoes, rice and bread may be added.

Fresh fruits are great for snacking; apples and oranges can go anywhere. Shoot for two to four pieces of fresh fruit per day. Mixed raw nuts also make a great snack. If you are trying to lose weight, limit the nuts to two handfuls per week.

Liquids: Alcohol, sodas, fruit drinks, and even fruit juices are high in calories and simple sugars (with the exception of alcohol). If you have a weight problem, stick to water and use these as dessert.

## Goals

Unfortunately, many people only eat a few healthy meals per week. The goal of this plan is to eat 15 healthy breakfasts, lunches, and dinners each week. A habit of 15 healthy meals per week puts most Americans way above average and still allows flexibility and indulgence. Compared to the normal American diet, this plan is higher in both soluble and insoluble fiber, vitamins and minerals and is lower in saturated fats, sugars, empty calories and chemicals. It is also high in phytochemicals and yields over 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. By putting healthier food in your body, you will feel better now, and reduce your chances of serious illness later.

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APRIL 2001