

Eating for life

# How to be healthy

**BFA nutritionist SHANE HEATON'S top 10 tips for healthy living are all about healthy habits.**

Going organic is a huge bonus for a lifetime of good health. But it's not the end of the story, is it? Nutritional science is increasingly revealing what we should and shouldn't do if we want to enjoy good health and a long life. While the advice appears to change quite regularly, some key understandings are emerging: the good news is that being healthy isn't as hard as it sounds.

The key is to develop positive healthy habits that you can continue, and enjoy, over a lifetime. These good habits can help you experience not only an absence of illness but a profound sense of positive health. So here they are – the 10 top tips for optimum health, and all you need to know about nutrition for a long and healthy life...

1

You've heard this one before. **Eat at least 4 servings of vegetables and 3 servings of fresh fruit every day** (especially dark green, leafy and root vegetables such as carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, broccoli, spinach, silverbeet, green beans, capsicums and peas, and fruit such as apples, pears, bananas, berries, melon and citrus fruit). Eat fresh, local, seasonal, whole, organic, raw food as often as you can. Organic fresh produce contains more nutrients and far fewer pesticides. A recent study of 15,000 people in Hawaii revealed that the more fruit and juice people ate (over 34 years), the greater their risk of Parkinson's disease – a degenerative brain-wasting disease. The researchers attributed this not to the fruit but to the pesticides on it. So, yes, eat more fruit and veg, but make sure it's organic.

2

Avoid refined carbohydrates (eg, white bread/rice) and **eat more complex and unrefined carbohydrates** such as whole grain starches (eg, wholemeal bread, brown rice, wholemeal pasta), beans and pulses. Wholegrains are fibre and mineral rich, have lower glycaemic impact and are now known to help lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

3

This one's really important and often overlooked in those crazy low-fat/no-fat diets. **Eat foods rich in essential fats** such as oily fish (mackerel, sardines, salmon), seeds (eg, hemp, flax, pumpkin, sunflower) and cold-pressed oils (eg, pumpkin or flaxseed oil). Essential fats lubricate your skin and joints, keep your cells healthy, are a major building block of your brain and reduce inflammatory responses such as allergies, asthma, eczema, arthritis and hayfever. If you have any of these, or even something as common as frequently dry skin and lips, you probably don't eat enough essential fats.

4

**Reduce consumption of harmful fats.** Avoid fried, burnt, barbequed or browned food, hydrogenated fat and excessive animal fat. While fried food is yummy, it's also one of the best ways we know of using a fork to dig your own grave. Eat it in moderation. Fried, burnt and barbequed foods contain masses of free radicals that damage cells and speed ageing. Hydrogenated fat is an artery-clogger found in many processed foods but, importantly, it's prohibited in organic foods. ➤

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5

Eat moderate amounts of animal protein (meat, dairy) and **increase your fish and vegetable sources of protein** (including nuts, seeds, beans, lentils and tofu). Choose organic meat and dairy products as much as you can. Why?

Apart from the animal welfare issue and the fact that it tastes better, one of the key reasons is that pesticides are fat-soluble: fatty foods such as meat and dairy can be major sources of pesticides in your diet. Eggs are an excellent source of protein and *won't* raise your cholesterol. Yes, you heard me right – dietary cholesterol has little effect on blood cholesterol because – newsflash! – your liver makes cholesterol! Studies again and again have failed to confirm a simple link between dietary cholesterol and blood cholesterol. This doesn't mean you can eat whatever fats you like – your overall blood fat profile is still important for your risk of heart disease. Hence the advice to eat fatty foods such as meat and dairy products in moderation and choose more fish, eggs, and vegetarian sources of protein.

6

**Drink plenty of mineral or filtered water** (at least six glasses a day), diluted juices, herbal or fruit teas. Get a juicer and try to use it every day. Water flushes your system and allows efficient elimination of toxins from your cells, organs and body.

7

**Do a short fast** at least twice per year. Get guidance first though. There are a range of detox programs to choose from and they are worth trying. The premise is that our world is more polluted than ever before – giving your body the time and space to have a spring clean once in a while is a must if you want optimum health and want to make it last.

8

**Minimise** your intake of salt, caffeine, sugar, food additives, over-processed foods, cigarette smoke and alcohol.

9


**Exercise regularly** and ensure you have 'down time' to relax every day. **Reduce the stress in your life.** Get a dog or a cat for a pet – it's well established as one of the best ways to reduce the stress in your life (unless they dig up the neighbour's yard).

10

**Supplement** a high-strength multivitamin/mineral and 1000mg of vitamin C every day. You may need more than this (ask your health professional) but this is a good baseline.

Probably *the* most important tip is to **enjoy your food**, and indeed your life. Eating healthily isn't about self-deprivation, eating only boring health stuff or about giving up all the things you like. Taking these simple steps, incorporating them as good habits in your normal routine, can have a profound influence on your wellbeing. As for your vices, if you eat well most of the time I firmly believe your body's resilience will be higher, such that it can withstand an occasional burden (read chocolate bar or plate of chips).

While these tips can help most people, they can't replace specific advice from your personal health professional. If you need more specific help restoring, maintaining or improving your health, you can find a nutritionist in your area by ringing the Australian Traditional Medicine Society on (02) 9809 6800. ■



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