

# Living a “Real Food” Lifestyle

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A BACK-TO-BASICS APPROACH TO LONG TERM  
HEALTH

## Introduction

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When you come home from work hungry and ready for a meal, what is your first stop? Do you head to the freezer to pull out a frozen prepared entrée? Or perhaps you head to the cupboard to warm up a can of soup or pasta. Unfortunately, this is what many Americans do when they are in need of a meal – they go for the quick and convenient option, perhaps not even aware of the negative effect these choices can have on their health. Fast food, processed foods and prepared entrees are full of harmful chemical and toxins that can severely damage your body with repeat exposure. Even those “diet foods” you see advertised on TV may not be as good for you as you think.

The modern American diet has led to increased instances of chronic disease like diabetes, heart disease and cancer. While there are many factors that play a role in determining these statistics, the modern diet is largely to blame. Consuming foods that have been artificially preserved, enhanced and flavored takes its toll on the body and many people do not realize the damage until it is too late. The solution to this problem does not involve taking some miracle drug or trying out the latest in alternative medicine – all you have to do is start eating Real Food. The Real Food Lifestyle is centered on whole, nutritious foods that are

good for your body. These foods will not only provide your body with the nutrients it needs, but they may also help reverse the damaging effect of the processed foods you have been eating all your life. If you are serious about improving your health and taking control of your life, let us help you explore the benefits of a Real Food Lifestyle.

## What are Whole Foods?

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If you have done any research about some of the diets that are currently popular in Western cultures (think the Paleo Diet, the Raw Food Diet, Veganism, Vegetarianism, etc.) you have probably heard the term “whole foods” kicked around. The term “whole food” applies to foods which are left in their natural state – unrefined, unprocessed and un-supplemented. Because these foods have not been altered by processing, they still contain vital minerals, vitamins and nutrients that are often lost during refinement.

Eating whole foods is the difference between drinking a glass of apple juice from concentrate and biting into a crisp, juicy apple. It is the difference between cutting into a steaming baked potato and whipping up a batch of boxed mashed potatoes. Diets based on whole foods are significantly different from the diets followed by many modern Americans and they offer a number of important health benefits.

## *How Our Ancestors Ate*

Over two million years ago, before the dawn of agriculture, humans engaged in a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Food sources were limited to fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and wild game. Because humans had not developed the technology needed to process grains or dairy products, these foods were generally not included in their daily diets.

There has been a great deal of research done in regard to the eating habits of early humans as related to instances of chronic disease. It is interesting to note that while the lifespan of early humans may have been shorter than that of modern humans, deaths were most often the result of accidents or, in females, childbirth, than they were a result of disease. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that early humans were largely unaffected by many of the chronic diseases that have reached near-epidemic proportion in many Western cultures. Diseases like diabetes and heart disease remain rare in non-Westernized cultures and there have been many studies conducted showing the link between diet and the development of chronic disease.

## *What Does a Real Food Lifestyle Look Like?*

In today's fast-paced society, it can be difficult to look past all of the fast food and frozen dinners that define our modern diet. Unfortunately, there is also a great deal of misinformation out there regarding "healthy" foods like whole grains, yogurt, skim milk and imitation meat. Many of these foods are just as processed as the foods you might find in the canned soup aisle or the frozen food section, even though they are marketed as being a healthy alternative.

It seems like every week there is a new diet or superfood "guaranteed" to improve your health – in reality, these fad diets may do more harm to your body than good. We hope to share with you a back-to-basics approach to Real Food Nutrition for long term health. Do you want to look, feel and perform better in your daily life. The Real Food Lifestyle is not another diet plan that has a predetermined period of duration – it is a solution to long term health and it is a way of life. In this book we will show you how processed foods and chemical

additives can be harmful to your health and how Real Food can improve your health and decrease your risk for chronic disease and inflammation.

## *Incorporating Whole Foods into Our Modern Lifestyle*

If you are used to eating fast food and frozen dinners, switching to a whole food diet may be big transition. Before you attempt to make such a significant dietary change it is a good idea to understand the basics of a whole food diet and how to incorporate it into your life. To start, you will need to eliminate all of the processed foods from your refrigerator and pantry. Take the opportunity to donate boxed meals and canned pasta to your local food pantry or give the food away to family and friends so that it does not go to waste. It is important to start with a clean slate if you are serious about switching to a whole food diet.

Are you ready to make a shift towards the Real Food Lifestyle? It's time to get rid of all those processed and refined foods and replace them with Real Food. After you have cleaned out all of the refined sugars, bleached flours, artificial sweeteners and processed foods from your kitchen you will need to restock. Pay a visit to your local health food store and stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables as well as raw nuts, seeds and protein. Keep in mind that many food companies treat their produce with chemical pesticides and livestock are often fed hormones to improve their growth and flavor. To steer clear of these products, stick to organic or all-natural products and look for eggs and meat from grass-fed or pasture-raised livestock. Another option is to join a local Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) group – this is a great opportunity to purchase Real Food in bulk at an affordable price. During the summer and fall, you should also be sure to visit your local farmers' markets.

Once you've stocked your kitchen with whole foods all that is left for you to do is to eat them! If you are used to eating out or popping a frozen meal in the microwave, it may take you some time to get used to preparing your own meals. Having a variety of whole foods on hand will help you to make healthier choices when it comes to meals. Do not think that switching to a whole food diet means spending hours of extra time in the kitchen cooking for yourself and your family. Whole foods can often be eaten raw with little to no preparation needed and, if

you do choose to cook a meal, make a little extra so you can enjoy the leftovers later in the week. Don't be afraid to explore a variety of cooking methods like slow-cooking which yields flavorful food with very little prep time required. Switching to a real food lifestyle does not need to be a hassle – it is good for your body and, if you do it right, it won't be bad for your busy schedule.

We want you to make this a lifestyle, therefore we will provide you with great recipes to create meals that will leave your body nourished without you feeling deprived!

# What is Real Food?

## **Real Food Is:**

- Real food is both nutritious and wholesome – it's good for your body
- Real food is safe to eat raw
- Real food is simple – it doesn't have an ingredient list half a page long
- Real food is ready to eat – it hasn't been sitting on a shelf or in the freezer for weeks before consumption
- Real food spoils – it hasn't been treated with preservatives to extend its shelf life
- Real food is still in its whole, original form – just as nature intended

## **Real Food Isn't:**

- Real food doesn't come in a pretty package
- Real food doesn't need any fancy claims to convince you how healthy it is
- Real food doesn't always look perfect – that's because it hasn't been altered
- Real food hasn't been fortified with additives to change its nutritional value
- Real food doesn't have to be refined, processed or cooked to be edible
- Real food has been around since the beginning of time – it isn't the product of human technology

## Health Benefits of Whole Foods

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### Reduced Risk of Chronic Disease

Many Western cultures exhibit near-epidemic levels of chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Through the work of numerous researchers and medical professionals it has become clear that the rise in the incidence of these diseases can be attributed, in part, to the unhealthy diet many Westerners choose to follow. The modern Western diet is largely based on processed foods and fast food. While some processed foods are marketed as being fortified with extra vitamins and minerals, they are also full of artificial preservatives, flavors and other additives which can have a negative effect on the human body. Studies have shown that individuals who eat a healthy diet centered on real foods like fruits and vegetables have a lower risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and many forms of cancer.

### Nutritional Value

The main benefit of real foods is that they are packed with the nutrients

your body needs to function properly. Food loses a significant amount of its nutritional value through processing and packaged foods cannot compare to the nutrient content of real foods like fruits and vegetables. When whole grains are refined, for example, the outer coating of the grain is removed which results in a significant decrease in fiber content. Many commercially produced food products are “enriched” with vitamins but, after processing and refinement, these foods are still much less nutritious than the original food source.

Real foods are packed with dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals which help to promote good health. Not only does real food contain valuable nutrients, but they also provide added health benefits due to the natural synergy between those nutrients. Studies of selenium, Vitamin E and various antioxidants have shown that, when eaten in real food rather than supplement form, these nutrients provide a higher benefit. Eating real food means that you will be consuming vital nutrients in their natural combination which ensures you the greatest benefit from the food you eat.

## **Increased Fiber Content**

Dietary fiber is a nutrient found in abundance in plant-based foods like fruits and vegetables. Fiber is well-known for helping to promote regularity and relieving constipation, but it provides a number of other important benefits as well. Meeting your daily recommended dose of fiber will lower your risk for diabetes and heart disease – it may also help you maintain a healthy weight. The Institute of Medicine recommends that males under the age of 50 consume 38 grams of fiber per day and females within the same age range should eat 25 grams per day. Males over the age of 51 require about 30 grams of fiber per day and females of the same age need about 21 grams per day.

There are two different types of dietary fiber which can be found in real foods. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and it helps to lower cholesterol and blood glucose levels. This type of fiber can be found in oats, peas, apples, beans, citrus fruits, carrots and barley. Insoluble fiber increases stool bulk, helping to move material through your digestive system. This type of fiber can be found in nuts, beans and vegetables like green beans and cauliflower. Processed foods often have a very low fiber content so eating real foods is an easy way to add some healthy dietary fiber to your diet.

## **Complex Antioxidants**

Foods that have not been processed have the benefit of containing their natural levels of complex antioxidants. Vegetables, fruits and other whole foods contain a number of different antioxidants including vitamins C and E. The benefit that antioxidants provide the body is in the form of protecting cells against damage. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) like free radicals may damage cellular membrane and alter the genetic material contained within the cell if they are not neutralized.

Free radicals may enter the body through exposure to toxins, pollutants and UV radiation. Not only can free radicals damage cellular membranes, but they have been linked to increased risk for cancer, arthritis, diabetes and atherosclerosis. Antioxidants like Vitamins C and E help to neutralize free radicals, thus protecting the body from the damage they can cause. Many processed foods are low in antioxidants while whole foods like fruits and vegetables have them in abundance.

## **Phytonutrients**

The term “phytonutrients,” or “phytochemicals,” refers to the natural chemicals which can be found in plants. These chemicals help to protect the plant against germs and other pests – when consumed by humans, these same chemicals may help to prevent disease and to maintain overall bodily health. Plant foods contain over 25,000 different phytonutrients but some of the most important for the human body are carotenoids, phytoestrogens and flavonoids. Different phytonutrients are found in different plants, so it is important to eat a variety of plant foods to achieve balanced nutrition.

There are over 600 different carotenoids but some of the most well-known include beta-carotene, lycopene and lutein. Beta-carotene can be found in yellow and orange plant foods like carrots and pumpkin and they are a good source of Vitamin A which helps promote eye health and immune system health. Lycopene is found in red or pink foods such as tomato, watermelon and pink grapefruit. This phytonutrient has been linked to decreased risk for prostate cancer. Lutein can be found in greens including spinach or kale and it helps to protect against macular degeneration and cataracts.

Phytoestrogens are a group of phytonutrients which includes lignans and isoflavones. These phytonutrients can be found in foods like berries, soybeans and flaxseed and consumption of these nutrients has been linked to decreased risk for breast and ovarian cancers. Flavonoids include catechins, hesperidin and flavonols which may help reduce the risk for asthma, cancer and coronary heart disease. These phytonutrients can be found in green tea, citrus fruits, apples, grapes, berries and onions.

## **Reduced Unhealthy Fat Content/Higher Healthy Fat Content**

When evaluating a real food diet it is important to note that it is not necessarily lower in fat, but the type of fats included in the diet are good for your body. Many modern Western diets are full of saturated and trans fats, both of which are harmful to the human body. Saturated fat comes from animal sources and it has been shown to raise both total blood cholesterol levels and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels – this type of fat can increase the risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Trans fat occurs naturally in some foods but it is most often the product of food processed through the hydrogenation of unsaturated fats. Also called synthetic trans fat, this type of fat can increase unhealthy LDL levels and lower healthy high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol levels.

The two types of healthy dietary fat include monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat. Monounsaturated fat is found in a variety of foods and oils and it has been shown to improve blood cholesterol levels, thus reducing risk for heart disease. This type of fat may also help regulate blood sugar levels, which is important for individuals suffering from type 2 diabetes. Polyunsaturated fat is found in plant-based foods and oil and it, too may improve blood cholesterol levels. One of the most important types of polyunsaturated fat is omega-3 fatty acid which is found in fish.

Removing processed foods from your diet will benefit you in a number of ways including reducing your consumption of unhealthy fats – saturated and trans fats. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published in 2010, recommends a total daily fat intake between 44 and 78 grams (about 20% to 35% your daily calorie intake). In switching to a real food lifestyle it is important that you consume foods that are good sources of healthy fat – monounsaturated fat and

polyunsaturated fat. Some good sources of healthy fat include olive oil, coconut oil, avocados, nuts and seeds like flaxseed.

# How Processed Foods Affect the Body

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## *Dangers of Packaged Foods*

You have probably heard about the dangers of MSG (monosodium glutamate), a food additive often used in Chinese food. This additive has been linked to excitotoxicity and a number of negative side effects which is why many people make an effort to avoid Chinese restaurants. If you think you are safe by eliminating Chinese take-out from your diet, think again. Not only is MSG used by fast food restaurants, but packaged foods may also contain MSG along with a number of other dangerous additives. Preservatives like nitrates which are used to preserve packaged meats have been linked to asthma and benzoic acid, an additive used in many fruit juices and carbonated beverages, has been known to produce severe allergic reactions.

Many people do not take the time to examine the ingredients label on the food they purchase and, even if they did, they would not be able to comprehend the complex chemical names used for additives like preservatives, flavor enhancers and sweeteners. Prior to the development of agriculture and the technology that enabled humans to make advances in food storage and preservation, our ancestors preserved foods by natural means. Meats were

preserved using salt and other foods were preserved through fermentation or drying. Today, over five thousand additives are used by food companies that produce processed foods. While some of these additives are beneficial, boosting the vitamin or mineral content of certain products, many of them have the potential to cause devastating effects on the human body.

The following additives have been linked to severe health problems:

### **Coloring Agents**

Every year in America, the food industry pumps thousands of tons of coloring agents into processed foods just to enhance their appearance. Foods like jelly, candy and beverages are almost always treated with coloring agents but these additives can also be found in surprising places like the skin of oranges, canned fruit, even popcorn. Nearly all coloring used in processed food is synthetic and much of it is derived from coal tar. Many artificial dyes have been linked to severe allergies as well as asthma, hyperactivity and increased risk for cancer.

### **Preservatives**

The food industry uses a wide variety of additives to keep food from spoiling – these additives are referred to as preservatives. Processed meats like bacon and ham are often treated with nitrites and nitrates, preservatives which have been known to cause nausea and vomiting as well as asthma and headaches. Sulfite, used to prevent produce from spoiling, has been shown to have these effects as well. Benzoic acid, also known as sodium benzoate, is used in fruit juice and carbonated beverages and it has been known to produce severe allergic reactions, even death, in some people. To prevent fruits from developing brown spots, additives like sulfur dioxide are often used. Sulfur dioxide is a toxic which bleaches out rot but also destroys the Vitamin B content of produce.

### **Antioxidants**

You are probably aware than certain antioxidants like alpha-carotene are beneficial for the body, but some antioxidants used in processed foods are not healthy. Antioxidants are often used in fatty foods to prevent them from spoiling when exposed to the air. Two of the most commonly used antioxidants in

processed foods are BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) and BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole). These antioxidants produced alarming results in animal testing such that some countries have restricted its use. In the US, however, use of these additives has increased, despite being linked to behavioral problems, hyperactivity and allergic reactions.

### **Artificial Sweeteners**

Most processed foods contain some type of sweetener, many of which are artificial sugar substitutes which have few or no calories and no natural sugar. The most common artificial sweeteners are saccharine and aspartame. During animal testing studies, saccharine was shown to increase the risk of bladder cancer in animal test subjects so all foods containing this sweetener must have a warning label. Aspartame is commonly used in soft drinks and it has been linked to behavioral problems including hyperactivity as well as allergies.

Another commonly used sweetener is high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) which is made by separating corn starch from the corn kernel. This sweetener has been linked to increased risk for cardiovascular disease, arthritis, diabetes and weight gain. Similar to high fructose corn syrup but often marketed as a healthy alternative to sugar is agave nectar. Agave nectar is derived from the agave plant and it contains even more fructose than HFCS – HFCS contains about 55% fructose while agave nectar contains between 55% and 97%.

### **Flavor Enhancers**

Including both natural and artificial additives, the food industry uses over 2,000 flavor enhancers to improve the taste of processed foods. In many cases, artificial flavors are composed of chemicals like monosodium glutamate (MSG). These chemicals have been seen to cause allergic reactions as well as behavioral reactions including dizziness, depressed, mood swings and headaches. There is some speculation that MSG may also be a neurotoxin.

### **Texturizing Agents**

Additives which alter the texture of food are generally referred to as texturizing agents and there are three different types: emulsifiers, stabilizers and thickeners.

Emulsifiers are used in foods like ice cream and mayonnaise to prevent the ingredients from separating. Stabilizers like pectin and agar are generally used to give food a firmer texture and to help stabilize emulsions. Thickeners are, of course, additives used to thicken food or to add volume. An example is potassium bromate, a chemical used to increase the volume of breads and flours – this agent has been shown to cause cancer in test animals and is also considered an endocrine disruptor. One of the most common emulsifiers used in foods, propylene glycol, is a synthetic solvent very similar to anti-freeze. This agent, though recognized as safe by the FDA, is toxic to the skin and has also been identified as a neurological toxicant.

### **Bleaching Agents**

In order to turn wheat into white flour, the type of flour that is most commonly used in baking, the wheat must be bleached. Various chemicals including oxide of nitrogen, nitrosyl, chloride, chlorine and benzoyl peroxide can be mixed with a number of chemical salts to produce this effect. Several of these bleaching agents – chloride oxide, in particular – have been known to catalyze a chemical reaction within the body that destroys beta cells in the pancreas. This chemical has also been linked to diabetes.

### **Growth Hormones**

While growth hormones may not be used to treat food directly, they are often given to livestock to increase milk production in dairy cows. The most common growth hormone used for this purpose is recombinant bovine growth hormone, or rBGH. Giving cows this hormone results in milk that has high levels of insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) which has been linked to increased risk for breast, colon and prostate cancers as well as early onset of puberty in girls. This hormone has also been known to increase mastitis in cows, a process by which blood and pus are secreted into the milk – rBGH can also lead to antibiotic resistance.

## *Misconceptions About “Healthy” Foods*

Commercial food companies spend thousands of dollars on marketing campaigns and packaging to make their products more appealing to consumers. Television commercials capture your attention with shots of hot, steaming meals accompanied by descriptors like “mouth-watering” and “delectable”. When you are in the grocery store, do you find your eyes being drawn to colorful packages with large print? All of these things are tactics used by food companies to sell their products. In some cases, the claims made on these commercials and packages are misleading or outright false.

When you think of “healthy” foods, do you picture things like whole wheat bread, low-fat yogurt and Healthy Choice frozen dinners? Unfortunately, many people do not realize that though these foods are marketed as healthy alternatives, they have a whole separate set of dangerous or unhealthy ingredients. Many prepared foods are made with hydrogenated oils that extend the shelf-life of the product but also introduce trans fatty acids which can contribute to increased risk for cancer and heart disease. If you read the nutrition facts on a frozen dinner package, you may also be surprised to see that the sodium content is extremely high. Many frozen meals contain as much as 700mg of sodium which is almost 1/3 your daily recommended intake.

Another common misconception about “healthy” foods is in regard to yogurt. You may be drawn in by the phrase “low-fat,” thinking that a cup of fruity yogurt is a healthy alternative to that chocolate chip cookie you’ve been eyeing. In reality, however, even plain yogurt can contain as much as 16 grams of sugar per cup – flavored yogurt may contain twice that much. Additionally, a lot of that sugar comes from high fructose corn syrup which is a contributor to heart disease and high cholesterol.

One “healthy” food that might surprise you for being included in this section is whole wheat bread. These days everything from pasta to breakfast cereal is made with whole wheat and many people mistakenly assume that this makes them healthy. In reality, products made with whole wheat are typically not made with 100% whole wheat – this means that they could still contain some enriched flour. Whole wheat bread has been known to induce blood sugar spikes followed by an unpleasant crash without actually providing much nutritional

value. Breads made with 100% whole wheat as well as multigrain breads are, however, a healthy option.

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## *Foods That Cause Inflammation*

“Chronic inflammation is the source of many diseases, including cancer, obesity and heart disease. It is important to realize that dietary components can either *trigger* or *prevent* inflammation from taking root in your body. For example, whereas trans fats and sugar, particularly fructose, will increase inflammation, eating healthy fats such as animal-based omega-3 fats found in krill oil, or the essential fatty acid gamma linolenic acid (GLA) will help to reduce them.”

- Dr. Mercola

Inflammation is linked to several chronic diseases including heart disease, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, arthritis and acid reflux. Not only can inflammation cause discomfort or pain, but it can actually cause severe damage to your body if left untreated. Though inflammation is the body’s natural response to stress, chronic low-grade inflammation is thought to be among the leading causes of disease and premature aging. Diet also plays a key role in reducing inflammation – the following foods are known to cause inflammation in the human body:

- Hydrogenated and Trans Fats (butter, margarine, shortening, etc.)
- Fried Foods (French fries, potato chips, hamburgers, etc.)
- Sugar and Sugary Drinks
- Artificial Sweeteners (Splenda, Nutrasweet, aspartame, saccharin, etc.)
- Chemical Additives (stabilizers, preservatives, artificial color, etc.)
- Dairy Products (milk, yogurt, ice cream, cottage cheese, etc.)
- Wheat Products (especially genetically modified wheat products)
- Alcohol (wine, beer, liquor, etc.)

### **The following foods have been identified as helping to fight inflammation:**

- Broccoli (high vitamin C and calcium content)
- Hemp Oil (and other oils containing omega-3 fatty acids)
- Wild-Caught Fish (contains omega-3 fatty acids)
- Walnuts (contains Vitamin E and omega-3 fatty acids)

- Onions and Garlic (contains quercetin, an antioxidant)
- Cherries (can reduce inflammation better than aspirin)
- Spinach (high in carotenoids and Vitamin E)
- Pineapple (contains bromelain, an antioxidant)