

Top 10 Diet and Lifestyle Changes That Will Impact Your Health

The following are some simple changes that you can make in your diet that will have a positive impact on your health and wellness.

1. **Drink more water.** Drinking 6 to 8 cups of water a day is one of the most important changes you can make. It's best to drink spring water or filtered water. Our blood is constantly being filtered through our kidneys. Water must be pulled from our blood in order for toxins to be eliminated. Without replenishing this water we become more and more dehydrated which can lead to joint pain, headaches, lethal blood clots, and fatigue, just to name a few.
2. **Eat more vegetables.** This is one of the best things that you can do to improve your health. I particularly love leafy green vegetables, including spinach, kale, and chard. Leafy greens and other vegetables like broccoli are full of healthy compounds that fight cancer, boost your immune system and keep your bones strong.
3. **Add fiber to your diet.** Adding fiber is a wonderful way to improve gut health. Soluble fiber includes apple pectin and oatmeal. Insoluble fiber includes wheat bran and flax seed. Fiber reduces the risk of colon cancer and other types of cancer and lowers bad cholesterol. Fiber feeds healthy bacteria in your gut, cleanses the bowel, reduces the risk of developing colon cancer and helps reduce weight.
4. **Add high quality oils to your diet.** Avoid margarine, canola, hydrogenated and trans fats and lard. Use olive oil or grape seed oil for cooking and don't heat above medium heat. Choose oils found in the fridge at your local health food store, including flax and borage oil, and my favorite: Udo's Oil Blend. These can be added to salads or protein shakes and never used for cooking. Replace butter with coconut oil in baking and on toast.
5. **Increase protein and decrease simple carbohydrates.** Simple carbohydrates are white breads, white pasta, white rice, sugary cereals, cookies, sugar, etc.. Eating simple carbs can create a spike in blood sugar and an eventual crash in energy. Protein takes a little longer to digest so the energy we get from it is delivered more steadily. A simple protein shake made with a high-quality protein powder, soy or almond milk, and perhaps a banana is a really quick and healthy way to start the day.
6. **Prepare meals at home.** Cooking your own food takes a bit of planning, but many foods are simple and easy to prepare. Plan your meals for the week and start building your repertoire of quick and easy recipes you like. Processed foods are usually heated to very high temperatures which have adverse effects on molecular structure and vitamin content. In addition, processed foods often contain preservatives, additives and colorings.
7. **Switch to non-gluten grains.** For many people, gluten causes a host of problems. Non-gluten grains include rice, corn, millet, quinoa, and amaranth. Gluten grains include wheat, barley, oats, and rye.
8. **Exercise.** Raising your heart rate as little as 20 minutes three times a week can greatly improve your overall energy, stamina, joint health, cardiovascular health and weight. Muscle is the only tissue on your body that does not require insulin to use sugar for energy. So, improving muscle mass is a great way to keep blood sugar in check, especially for those who are at risk for developing Diabetes.
9. **Avoid foods high in arachidonic acid.** Arachidonic acid is a major cause of inflammation. Foods high in arachidonic acid are red meat, pork and all forms of dairy.
10. **Buy foods in the grocery store from the periphery of the store.** Most of the foods in the center of the store are packaged and processed. Buy the bulk of your food from the produce section and the meat counter. Always go shopping with a list of the foods and ingredients you will need for your meals for the week. Write your menu on a dry erase board on the refrigerator so you know what's inside and what you can make with it.