

Energize yourself with good nutritional habits

by Brian Bethell, IMAW EAP representative, Vancouver

We all know by now just how important good nutrition is to our overall health, but it's still interesting how many people still fail to meet basic guidelines for healthy eating.

For instance, Canada's Food guide to healthy eating recommends at least five servings of vegetables and fruits; however typically only 47 per cent of women obtain the recommended servings while men do even worse – just 32 per cent meet those recommended standards.

Indeed, our health, and ability to work, play and live productively is

dependent in part on our attention to achieving a balanced, healthy diet.

That's not always easy. An excerpt from a recent report prepared by the CBC confirms what we all instinctively know:

Canadians are working longer hours and allowing less time for regular meals, according to a Statistics Canada report released in February 2007. All too often, regular mealtimes are taking a back seat to hectic work schedules — which is a problem, because when you eat can be as important to good health as what you eat.

In fact, proper meal timing may be just the thing you need to cope with a busy schedule. It leads to increased energy levels, decreased risk of obesity and fewer food cravings.

Effective meal timing provides a consistent source of energy throughout the day by keeping blood sugar levels stable. Achieving the right balance of portion control and proper timing of meals will help keep your metabolism revved up and allow your body to use calories more efficiently.

And it all starts with breakfast, according to the report:

Healthy meal timing starts with breakfast. While it may be the hardest meal to fit into a hectic schedule, it is critical in terms of kick-starting your metabolism for the day. While there is no official time to eat breakfast, it is best eaten shortly after waking up, usually before your daily activities begin.

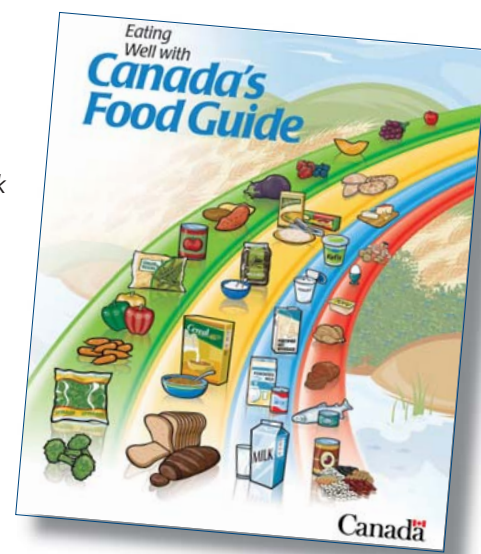
Often, people skimp on breakfast or skip it completely because they simply don't have time in the morning. Others think skipping the morning meal will help them shed pounds.

Either way, it's a mistake.

Numerous studies have shown that people who eat breakfast are better able to pay attention and concentrate throughout the day, due to increased energy levels. In fact, a review of 47 studies published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association in May 2005 found that breakfast consumption improved cognitive function related to memory, test grades and school attendance in students.

Just as important is watching what you eat. Here are some suggestions:

- New regulations published in 2003 make nutrition labeling mandatory on most food labels, allowing Canadians to compare products more easily. Read these labels carefully.
- Don't eat what you can't pronounce. If the substances listed as ingredients aren't found in nature then your body is not equipped to handle them.
- Don't be duped, taking words like 'light' or '50% less fat' at face value. The food could still have a relatively high fat content. Do a comparison of nutrition labels from the 'light' and regular product. A product



that's 'light' or 'low fat' isn't always as healthy as you might think.

- Don't be fooled by labels telling you a product contains calcium, vitamins or specific nutrients. That fruit punch may contain 100 per cent of your required vitamin C intake for the day, but it lacks the fibre and other nutrients found in a plain old orange, as well as being full of calories and sugar.
- Buy organic food if you can.
- Eat more fresh produce. Fruits and vegetables contain heaps of nutrients and help prevent illness.
- Prepare your own food. Buying prepared meals is quicker and easier but most of these contain unhealthy ingredients.

Your EAP coordinators are here to help you find the resources you need for any issue that may be impacting your well-being. Please give us a call.

Need help?



Your EAP coordinators are here to assist you with any issues that may be impacting you or the well-being of those close to you. Give us a call.

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