eat right boston

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Not All Low Carb Diets are Equal

In an article published in Lancet Public Health Journal in August 2018, researchers looked at the effects of both a low and high carbohydrate diet on mortality. Low carb diets with protein and fats derived from animal sources were associated with a higher mortality rate. Whereas low carb diets that were higher in protein and fats derived from plant sources like vegetables, nut butter and whole grain breads were associated with a lower mortality rate.

Researchers found that low carb (<40%) and high carb (>70%) diets were linked with an increased mortality. Moderate consumption of carbs (50-55%) had the lowest rate of mortality.

The study included more than 432, 000 people from over 20 countries and was led by a team at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Low carb diets are popularized by their quick weight loss results but the research team has demonstrated and recommends that low carb-animal protein diets should definitely be discouraged.

According to Walter Willett, MD at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, "too much and too little carbohydrate can be harmful but what counts most is the type of fat, protein, and carbohydrate."

Sleeping Beauty Had the Right Idea

The Daylight Saving Time change occurs on November 4th. While we "fall behind" and gain an hour in our day, it gets darker sooner in the day here on the East coast. I always wonder what our forefathers did when darkness prevailed. And I think the simple answer is they went to bed! Not so for us techie 21st century-ites.

If you're a person with a healthy heart, the pulse of your heartbeat, pretty much goes lub-dub, lub-dub… that's called a rhythm in the music world, and it's the song your heart loves to sing! When people have arrhythmias, their beats are "off," which makes them tired and sluggish a lot of the time. For the Ethel Merman fans in the audience, if you've "got rhythm… who could ask for anything more?"

Besides our hearts pumping away, each and every cell in our body ticks to an internal pacemaker beat. Our body loves patterns and it especially craves regular sleep cycles. I remember going to a conference where a sleep expert posted a map of the U.S. on the screen. Then, in blue lights, he illuminated all of the areas where computers, tablets, phones and TVs were being used across the country. The blue lights represented the blue wavelengths these devices emit. It was eye opening to say the least. The whole map lit up like the aurora borealis lights (except in blue)!

Melatonin is the hormone that the body releases to prepare you for sleep at night. When the sunlight goes down, melatonin is naturally secreted by the pineal gland in the brain; it's pretty much taking its own siesta during the day. Harvard researchers have shown that the shorter wavelengths of blue light suppresses melatonin and disturbs the body's biological clock, also known as the *circadian rhythm.* In fact, they found that the lights shifted the circadian rhythm by as much as three hours a day! Researchers propose that when this natural rhythm gets disturbed, there are health consequences that result, which include obesity and diabetes.

One of the most important things about sleep is that it allows your body to regenerate itself. I always marvel at the thought that by resting your body, even if it's just a 15-minute catnap, allows your body to reset itself. Sleep, in essence, is an everlasting battery!

Lack of sleep also affects the satiety hormones, *ghrelin and leptin*. I have written about these before but the Cliff note version is these two hormones work together to modulate when and how much we eat. Ghrelin levels sets off the hungry stomach growls. Lack of sleep increases ghrelin levels, which ultimately means we will eat more food! Lack of sleep also decreases leptin levels the hormone that is supposed to tell us to stop eating. Which means we will eat for a longer time period, and yes…more food!!

On top of this, if the body lacks energy, its first callout is going to be for sugar. It's what gets processed the quickest and gives us the quick burst of energy (along with caffeine, of course!).

Try to establish regular schedules for eating, exercising, relaxing and sleeping if you can. Set routines allow your body to work more consistently and efficiently if it senses you are treating it well. Here are some other ideas to help you get your Zzz's:

- Use dim red lights for nightlights (FYI, fluorescent and LED bulbs contain blue lights).
- Power down electronics beginning two hours before bedtime.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Make a goal to sleep for 7-8 hours a night.
- Make your bedroom a clutter free area.
- Exercising before bedtime can keep some people up at night; simple stretches are the better way to relax, if this is your case.
- Use meditation or a guided imagery CD (not an app!) to relax before bedtime.

It's A lot to Digest-I Know!

I get a lot of patients that come to see me for gastrointestinal health. Most complain of bloating, gas, diarrhea, and overall tummy upset and have just been diagnosed with IBS. The first thing I share is that I have IBS myself, and that there's a lot more information about it now then there was thirty years ago when I was diagnosed with it. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is prevalent in 3-20% of the U.S. population. It is fast becoming the most common functional gastrointestinal (GI) disease globally, as well.

First of all IBS is very different from Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), which include Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. These two are autoimmune disorders that present in 1-2% of Americans. Bloody stool and abdominal cramping are a few of their symptoms. Endoscopy and colonoscopy studies are used to diagnose them and they are generally treated with medication. For the sake of this article we are concentrating on IBS only.

IBS is referred to as a "functional disorder" because the digestive tract doesn't work as it should; causing abdominal nerves and muscles to become "hyper" sensitive. Signals between the brain and gut work overtime. IBS can manifest itself as alternating diarrhea and constipation, severe abdominal cramping, bloating gas and a dull or sharp abdominal pain. Contractions in the gut are more frequent and stronger than a non-IBS person. Physicians are more tuned in than they were in my day and there's more information out there now, but there's still a lot more research that needs to be done.

Diet therapy plays a significant role in IBS management but since no single pattern is routinely found in all patients with IBS, there is not a one size fits all approach with IBS. Treatment plans are very individualized and require close attention to food intake records and GI symptoms. It takes a skilled dietitian (like me!) to work with IBS patients.

The low FODMAP diet is a starting point for many patents afflicted with IBS. FODMAP is an acronym for a group of "*fermentable short chain carbohydrates*," that are poorly absorbed in the small intestine. It stands for: **F**ermentable **O**ligo-saccharides, **D**isaccharides, **M**onosaccharides, **A**nd **P**olyols. And for some people who may not digest them very well, these natural sugars and/or fibers enter the large intestine (undigested) and wreak havoc in the colon. Gas is created and bloating ensues.

The FODMAP diet is not a fad diet. It is based on scientific evidence. It's not meant for weight loss or improving general health. It is intended for people who suffer from a medically diagnosed, gastrointestinal disease like IBS. While bacterial fermentation is a normal part of life, too much gas is uncomfortable and can disrupt one's daily activities. Left untreated, there is no damage done to the intestinal tract, as there is with celiac disease or IBD.

The researchers at Monash University in Australia originated the FODMAP approach; they continue to maintain current literature. Treatment for FODMAPs is in the form of an *Elimination Diet*. It is meant to be short-term, but long enough to discern what foods are the source of your own personal triggers. Secondly, there is a re-challenge process that helps to identify the food culprits. By monitoring your intake and paying close attention to your symptoms during this time period, you should be able to identify these foods, and allow some balance and variety in your diet. And you can finally feel better!

I am trained in the low FODMAP diet protocol. But always check first with your physician if you are experiencing any of these symptoms noted above.

Fish Oil Supplements and Dry Eyes

A research study, funded by the National Eye Institute, and published in the New England Journal of Medicine in April 2018, showed that fish oil supplements showed no benefit for dry eyes. According to the director of the clinical research center at the institute, this study provides "the most reliable" evidence for omega 3 supplementation for eye health. Dry eye disease occurs when the film that coats the eye; leading to visual impairment and discomfort.

Dry eye disease a disease afflicts more than 14% of adults in the United States. For this study, 535 people with moderate to severe dry eyes were gathered to test the effects of omega 3 fatty acid supplementation on the disease. Participants were randomly assigned. One group received a placebo, which contained 5 grams of olive oil. The other group received a 3-gram daily dose of omega 3 fatty acids (divided into five capsules over the course of the day).

After 12 months, symptom scores revealed that while both groups improved a little, there was no significant difference between the two groups when it came to measuring the amount and quality of tears, and to the integrity of the cornea and the conjunctiva (the surface tissue that covers the front of the eye). While the study did not support the use of omega 3-fatty acid supplements to treat patients with dry eye disease, they did notice that some improvements in eye health.

While this study did not support improvements in dry eye symptom, the American Heart Association recommends that adults should eat fish at least twice a week as a part of a heart healthy diet. Fatty fish, such as halibut, salmon, striped sea bass, and albacore tuna are good sources of omega 3-fatty acids.

And, as always, talk with your health care provider taking a vitamin supplement.

It was another (too) HOT of a summer. Hope you all got a chance to relax (maybe in a hammock?) and reset your own energy levels. I'm honored to have been approached by a publishing company to write a book on gout! So, I am busy at work, again!

Happy Fall

Sophie

CONTACT INFO:

Sophia Kamveris, MS, RD, LD
22 Mill St-Suite 105-Arlington, MA 02474
www.eatrightboston.com
(P) 617-515-8984