Resolve—To Eat Smarter!

It’s a new year and the season for resolutions and good intentions. Losing weight and getting in shape are at the top of many people’s lists. Unfortunately, most efforts start out with a bang and peter out after the first month or two. Often, it’s a result of adopting a fad diet or planning to work out every day. These approaches are simply not sustainable over a long period of time.

What most people don’t appreciate is that small, sustained changes produce big, lasting results. For instance, it only takes a change of 100 calories a day to stop someone from gaining weight. Find a way to cut out 250 calories a day and you could lose a half-pound a week, week after week.

Maybe this year you’ll resolve to eat smarter, as opposed to dieting or putting your focus on the scale. This issue of Sound Bites is dedicated to helping you sort out the myths and facts on healthy eating and exercise and giving you the tools to make changes you can live with!

Calories—All the Same?
The nutrition world has a common saying, “a calorie is a calorie is a calorie”. The saying is true when we consider the amount of energy that any food would produce, regardless of its source, if the calories in each food were the same. However, the general public perceives calories as being different, depending on their source: carbohydrates, protein or fat. In fact, 52% of Americans believe they can lose weight and keep it off by reducing carbohydrates alone without counting calories. Are they on to something?

It turns out that there are many factors and properties in food that influence food intake: taste, mouth feel, chewing time, stomach distention, digestibility, rate of absorption, hormonal changes in the stomach and metabolic signals.

So, it’s not as simple as breaking food down into carbs, protein and fat—or calories, for that matter. So, what’s behind the notion that high-protein, low carb diets help you lose weight without feeling hungry?

The Secret of Satiety
Diets that are proportionately higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates produce a greater sense of satiety, which is the feeling of satisfaction you get after you eat. Some of this has to do with the longer period of time it takes to digest such a meal, compared to one that is high in carbs/low in protein. The result may be that you eat less because you don’t get hungry as often. So, does this mean you should cut out all carbs and just go for protein? Absolutely not! Keep both the protein and the carbs in your meal and surround them with lots of vegetables.

“Wise Choice” Makes It Easy

Starting this semester, it will be easier than ever to make healthy choices in the dining halls: just look for the Wise Choice logo. Developed by Laura O’Gara, campus nutritionist, each menu item given the Wise Choice designation will conform to specific criteria for calories, fat, cholesterol and sodium. Values for these nutrients, along with protein, carbohydrates and fiber, will be posted in the dining halls and on the web: www.campusdish.brandeis.edu.

Steps Toward a Healthier Lifestyle

- Make Half Your Grains Whole 6oz. of Whole Grains Each Day
- Vary Your Veggies 2½ Cups Each Day
- Go Lean with Protein 5½ Ounces per Day
- Focus on Fruit 2 Cups per Day
- Get Your Calcium Rich Foods 3 Cups per Day
- Make Physical Activity Part of Everyday Life
- Know the Limits of Fats, Sugars and Salt

Contact the Nutritionist
Laura O’Gara, RD, LDN is available to meet individually with students at the Health Center Mondays through Thursdays. Visits are free and can be arranged by calling x63677.

She can also be reached by voicemail at x63696 or by email at: logara@brandeis.edu.
Fitness: Great Reasons to Be Active

Everyone recognizes that being physically active is part of a healthy lifestyle but there are a lot of misconceptions about how much and what types of exercise one should do. Here’s the straight scoop on exercise:

Activity Burns Calories
Whether you go fast or slow, you can be active at your own comfortable pace and still benefit. Small amounts really add up.

Activity Boosts Metabolism
You continue to burn calories even when you stop exercising because your metabolic “furnace” stays in high gear for a while.

Activity Builds Muscle
Muscle uses about four times as much energy as fat does. A program of lifting weights two to three times a week will tack on a pound of muscle every month or two.

Activity Improves Self Esteem
Being active usually helps you feel better about your body, leading to increased self-esteem.

Activity Predicts Weight Loss Maintenance
People who engage in regular physical activity are most likely to sustain their weight loss, compared to people who only cut calories.

How much do you need to do? Start with 30 minutes of cardio 3 days a week and gradually add more minutes, either to your sessions or by adding extra days. Another approach is to track the number of steps you take in a day by using a pedometer. A typical day for an office worker is 3000-3500 steps. To achieve a moderate level of activity, aim for 10,000 steps a day.

Lifting weights can take as little time as 30 minutes, twice a week, with a rest day in between.

Beyond Calorie Counting

Our society is so dependent on numbers! But there are many ways to shape up your diet without tracking calories or fat grams. Start with your current habits and pick one or two that you’d like to change. Maybe it’s your late-night snack choices or the number of desserts you have in the dining halls. Do you skip meals and then go overboard later? Make a plan for correcting these problem behaviors and set a time frame for turning things around.

Here are some other things to consider:

HFCs
Some people suspect that our current rise in obesity rates are tied to the increase in the number of products that contain high-fructose corn syrup. While there’s no evidence that HFCs alters metabolism or increases food intake, many Americans are getting up to 3 times the recommended amount of sugar in their diet and nearly half of that comes from HFCS. Check your labels for this ingredient.

Light Salad Dressings: Get Real
Light and fat-free salad dressings are generally too heavy on sugar and salt and too light in nutritional benefits. A real vinaigrette (such as the ones at the Balance station) or simple oil and vinegar (at the salad stations) give you healthy monounsaturated fats without all the gunk.

Shake Up Your Salt Habit
What are you tasting when you eat? If it’s just salt, you’re missing out on the link between satisfaction and the taste of the food itself (and may end up eating more than you need to). Check the new nutrition charts for sodium content, as well as food labels: keep sodium to 3000 mgs a day.

Putting Portions in Perspective

There’s been much discussion over the growth in the size of the average American meal, with restaurants bearing the brunt of the blame. When nutritionists and health experts speak in terms of “servings” a la’ Pyramid, most people are aghast at the paltry portions, having been conditioned to amounts many times the reference size.

Without getting into the technical aspects of “servings” vs “portions”, it’s easy to get a handle on where you’re going overboard and what you’re actually getting.

Fortunately, for folks eating in the dining halls, the amounts served are more in line with what’s appropriate for the average adult.

Listed below are the Brandeis average portions per meal:

3 ounces of protein
1 cup of grain
1 cup of vegetables

These served portions may vary depending on the station, but are the targeted serving sizes established by Dining Services.

You can use estimation tricks to gauge portions, wherever you happen to eat:

3 oz meat, fish = deck of cards
1 cup = tennis ball
1 teaspoon = tip of your thumb

Want to reduce your overall portion size? Try fooling your eyes by using a smaller plate or bowl. Fool your stomach by starting a meal with an apple or cup of soup.