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# If It's Not Food, Don't Eat It

### **Building an eating lifestyle based on solid ground.**

By Kelly Hayford, M.A., C.N.C

When Betty first came to me she was taking seven medications, had severe osteoarthritis, could barely walk, was in constant pain and had to catheterize herself daily — among other things. She had heard that making certain dietary changes could be beneficial to her health, and that there were natural herbs and supplements that might be helpful as well. But she didn't know much about it and because her condition was so severe, she really doubted that such an approach could actually do anything for her. In addition, her health care plan did not cover such expenses. Betty came to me only because the price of her medications was increasing to a level she could no longer afford, and her persistent friend had insisted.

Upon reviewing her food diary, a requirement for all incoming clients, I asked Betty if any of her doctors had ever inquired about her diet or given her any dietary guidelines. She told me that none had ever asked. Her food diary revealed a Standard American Diet. It looked like something an average American might be eating—and that was the problem.

Betty was skeptical about my recommendations at first, but I kept encouraging her to give them a try. “Trust me:” I would say, “the results are what will convince you.” Out of desperation she reluctantly followed my advice; but was delighted when, in just a few short weeks she was able to go off four of her medications, was virtually pain-free, could walk without using her walker, had lost a few pounds, and was generally beginning to feel much better. In addition, Betty's latest cholesterol test showed scores below what they had been when she was taking cholesterol-lowering medication.

What did Betty do to achieve such dramatic improvements in her health in such a short period of time? It may surprise you to know that Betty didn't cut or count calories or carbohydrates or fat, go on a special diet, deprive herself of favorite foods, take a special pill or herbal formula, undergo hypnosis, or start an intensive workout program. She simply began to make the switch from the low-quality, chemical-laden processed food brands she had been eating for years, to higher quality, additive-free natural food brands of the same foods. She also began to include a small amount of whole, fresh, natural foods, primarily a couple of fresh fruits or vegetables, into her diet each day.

How can this be so? This is so because the most popular brands of processed, packaged chemical-laden foods (pseudo-foods) so widely consumed today, and are injurious to the body. In fact, poor eating habits characterized by the regular consumption of these fake-foods, saturated with refined sugar, sodium, unhealthy fats, and toxic chemicals, are the greatest weapon of mass destruction the world has ever known.

Not a weapon in the usual sense, but a weapon nonetheless, as a result of the devastation it is causing. Betty isn't the only one suffering. As a result of the regular consumption of low-quality

nutrient-deficient food, our nation has recently entered into the beginning stages of a major health crisis; a health crisis of such magnitude that it has the potential to change life in America as we know it. Aside from the obvious diet-related conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or obesity, few people realize poor nutrition and eating habits are the root causes of all chronic disease.

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Betty is just one of millions who are unaware of the chronic disease her standard American diet was causing. Fortunately, by making a few small changes she was able to begin to turn her health around. The accepted way of eating in our modern post-industrialized society is so far out of balance from what nature intended, that when people like Betty begin to restore that balance by even marginally eating in a way that Nature did intend, dramatic results occur. Many, if not all, of the symptoms—which are merely warning signals from the body that we’re doing something wrong—diminish significantly or completely go away. Although Betty may never be able to completely reverse some of her diseases as they may have progressed too far, she has been able to get relief from many, beyond what any drugs or medical procedures had been able to do in the past.

## **Food Matters**

Inspired by the success stories of others, new health-related information being released, and the failure of medical and similar approaches aimed at treating the symptoms rather than eliminating the causes, an increasing number of people are becoming aware of this relationship between diet and disease and taking measures to revamp their diets.

As chiropractors, you know that symptoms are the last thing to show up and the first thing to disappear. Just because someone is not currently experiencing any adverse symptoms or diseases, doesn’t mean that there may not be some in the works—no matter what their age. Many people knowingly continue unhealthy eating habits because they feel OK, not realizing that many diseases can be simmering in the body long before any symptoms appear. In addition to missing out on the vital nutrients that quality foods provide, habitual poor eaters are running toxic disease-causing foods through their bodies every day, often multiple times a day. Although they may not currently have heart disease, diabetes, cancer, etc. (or at least have not yet been diagnosed with anything) they are still consistently causing a great deal of damage to their bodies. This will eventually catch up to them in one form or another; if not in the form of a catastrophic disease, most probably in the form of a compromised quality of life.

Which leads us to another set of people who may believe that they are eating healthy, and who may be surprised to learn that, in fact, they are not? One of the biggest challenges facing America today is that many, many people do not realize that they are eating poorly. After all, they’re eating what everyone else is eating—and there’s a big clue right there. If someone is eating what has come to be known as the standard American diet—basically, what everyone else is eating these days—they are most likely headed for trouble.

## **Eating For Health**

At its very core, “Eating for Health” is about putting your health at the forefront of your mind when making food choices. It is not a fad or a special diet. It is a return to the natural way of eating that existed before our food culture was dominated by the profit-minded mega pseudo-food industry—with a little refinement, a little personalization, and a little allowance for modern living.

When applied consistently over time, “Eating for Health” brings about what many have deemed “amazing” results. It is miraculous what the body can do when it is provided with the right fuel—energy is restored, excess weight is shed, body systems are regenerated, disease is reversed, and nagging symptoms disappear. Of course everyone is different and will therefore experience different results depending on a variety of factors, such as present and past health conditions, age, weight, current diet and levels of exercise. However, given time, those who consistently follow the “Eating for Health” concepts will reap beneficial results — no matter what condition they were in when they began.

The “Eating for Health” guidelines are designed to inform, guide and alleviate nutritional confusion. They act as steering mechanisms for making food choices that are nourishing and supportive to your body at this-particular time in your life. Rather than rigid rules to be followed, they help guide you in the direction that you want to go, providing enough flexibility so that you remain the captain of your ship. In brief, here are the five guidelines:

### **1. If it’s not food, don’t eat it!**

Anything that is not created by Mother Nature and is not nourishing and supportive to the human body in general, would subsequently come to be defined as substances that are not food. Ask yourself; “Is this item a real food or is it a pseudo-food or stimulant?” If you do partake of a pseudo-food, wait a long time before you do it again so your body can recover.

### **2. Eliminate or relegate stimulants to rare occasions.**

All stimulants or extreme foods send your body’s chemistry soaring out of balance, then crashing in the opposite direction in an effort to restore the balance. Stimulants include, but are not limited to: sugars, including refined carbohydrates (high fructose corn syrup, white refined flour, etc.), and all concentrated\*-sweetener; refined; salt; caffeine; and chocolate; alcohol.

### **3. Eat an abundance of whole, fresh, natural foods.**

The easiest way to know if a food is whole, fresh or natural is to ask yourself if you could find it out in nature. If you took a walk in the jungle or on a farm would you see it? Have you ever heard of a Tator-Tot tree or a bagel bush? If the answer is no, then it’s a processed food. Any food that has been ground, separated, processed, refined and stripped of its parts and many—or all—of its valuable nutrients, would not be considered a whole food. If a food has been cooked, processed or preserved in any way, it is not fresh. The fresher food is, the more alive it is, which means the more enzymes and life-force energy it contains. Natural foods do not contain any artificial or chemical additives, such as colorings, preservatives, flavor enhancers, etc.

## **Account for food Allergies and Sensitivities**

Ask yourself; “Does this food agree with my system or is it something to which I have sensitivity or an allergy?” Many people are eating foods, especially wheat, dairy, soy and sugar that are causing them digestive problems, constipation, inflammation, congestion and sinus problems, depression and otherwise upsetting the body/mind system as a result. Although some people may not show a full-blown allergy to these foods, they may be sensitive or intolerant to them on other levels. Another problem is that people usually eat the foods they are sensitive to on a daily basis and their symptoms become chronic.

### **5. Account for ailments.**

There isn't any condition in the body that can't be improved by improving your diet. Before eating, ask yourself, “Does this food support, or work against, any health conditions I am experiencing?” As you start improving the quality of your diet you will start feeling better and improving the overall quality of your health. Other areas of your life will start improving as a result. Health is your natural state of being.

## **Building a New Foundation**

“It's really amazing the results I'm getting and how easy it's been.” Betty expressed during a phone consultation we had a few weeks later. “I can't believe how much better I feel. I never would have imagined this was possible.” Her voice became somber, as she further reflected, “Why didn't anyone tell me? If only I had known that such simple changes in my diet could make such a big difference, I wouldn't have had to suffer so much, for so long.”

Her words sounded all too familiar. They were almost the exact words that I had muttered to myself many times years ago, as I began to discover the relationship between the food I ate and my declining health. Why have poor eating habits become the norm rather than the exception for the overwhelming majority of people in this country? Why have we as a society increasingly lost sight of the value of eating nutritious foods for the preservation of our health and well-being? In

### **SCARY HEALTH STATISTICS**

The following statistics are a representative sample of some of the most frequently occurring and ~ conditions and chronic diseases plaguing America today that are inextricably linked to diet and lifestyle.

- **Sixty-four percent of the people in America are overweight—the highest percentage of any country in the world.**
- **Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death in America.**
- **Cardiovascular diseases account for more than 40 percent of all deaths in the United States.**
- **One out of every 2.5 people will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime—that's almost half the population.**
- **More than 90 million Americans live with chronic illnesses.**
- **Poor nutrition and lack of physical exercise are associated with 300,000 deaths each year.**

answer to these questions, the popular food culture that has developed over the last few decades and the devastating affect it is having on our nation's health, is a complex issue; an issue destined to be perpetuated unless awareness, understanding and viable solutions are brought forth.

Like anything, what you put into it will determine what you get out of it. And therein lays the challenge. "Eating for Health" is easier said than done for many. After a lifetime of eating in a habitual manner that is the norm for our society at large, it is difficult to break free and begin anew. They may not seem easy at first, but the five "Eating for Health" guidelines are guaranteed to help you feel better, have more energy~ lose weight and create a brighter future for not only yourself, but for the world at large. •

**Excerpted from If It's Not Food Don't Eat It! by Kelly Hayford.**

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**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

*"Eating for Health" is designed to make it easy for you to choose foods that are supportive and nourishing for the human body in general, and for your individual body in specific. Subsequent sections in the book offer an abundance of practical tools, recipes and, most importantly, strategies for dealing with the social and mental gymnastics that so greatly influence our food choices and behavior. For more information on how to purchase a copy of If It's Not Food, Don't Eat It! visit [www.FoodFitnessByPhone.com](http://www.FoodFitnessByPhone.com).*