

I want to feel healthy, but I don't know where to start – help!

There are some basic facts to healthy eating. Researchers agree that the bottom line is whole grains and a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Eat low fat foods with a variety of protein sources to meet activity levels and personal needs. So what does all that mean?

First of all, many people do not know that fiber is essential to health, and meat and dairy products have no fiber! Our bodies run on carbohydrates – but processed foods, white flour, excessive caffeine, and sugars are extremely detrimental and cause a multitude of imbalances and dis“ease”. Read drmcDougall.com for more info on differences in need for whole grains based on digestion issues. For instance a compromised digestive system may do better with white rice and cooked veggies – always check with your medical professional and consider your specific needs when deciding on dietary choices. Some options to start your day with are: a good level of fiber cereal (5 to 9 grams), a fruit protein shake, an egg and whole grain toast. There are also tofu substitutes for eggs – tofu scrambler, my favorite, and other soy options to breakfast meats.

Consider protein options such as legumes (beans are high in fiber!!!), or Pacific NW, wild salmon and other coldwater fishes (check oceans alive or seafood choices alliance sites for more info.). Dr. Andrew Weil states that his “nutritional research convinced me of the health benefits of fish”. He goes on to say “...fish provides high-quality protein without the saturated fat present in meat and poultry. And some kinds of fish - specifically, fatty fish from cold northern waters - also provide omega-3 fatty acids, the special, unsaturated fats our bodies need for optimum health. Wild salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines and bluefish are rich in them, as is - to a lesser extent - albacore tuna.

Omega-3 sources other than fish are few: walnuts, flax seeds, hemp seeds, and the oils extracted from them, and, to a lesser extent, soy and canola oils and specially fortified eggs. Consider eating vegetarian, organic/free range eggs, and any dairy or meat is best if organic as well. This way you avoid taking in the antibiotics, bovine growth hormone, and stress hormones that factory farms use.

Printed in the SCAD Chronicle 2006, under the heading, HEALTH GURU written by Wellness counselor, Ellen Farrell who coordinated wellness and lifestyle management services in the department of student recreation and fitness.