

10 Simple Dietary Changes to Improve Your Health

The following are some simple changes that you can make in your diet that will have a positive impact on your health and wellness.

1. Drink more water

Drinking 6 to 8 cups of water a day is one of the most important dietary changes you can make. It's best to drink spring water or filtered water.

2. Add fiber

Adding fiber is a wonderful way to increase GI health. Soluble fiber includes apple pectin and oatmeal. Insoluble fiber includes wheat bran and flax seed. Fiber reduces the risk of colon cancer and other types of cancer and lowers bad cholesterol.

3. Add a high quality oil

Avoid margarine, canola, and oils that can be stored at room temperature. Use olive oil or grape seed oil for cooking and don't heat above medium heat. Choose oils found in the fridge at your local health food store, including flax and borage oil, and my favorite: Udo's Oil Blend. These can be added to salads or protein shakes and never used for cooking. Replace butter with coconut oil in baking and on toast.

4. Increase protein and decrease simple carbohydrates

Many people are sensitive to the increase in glucose and insulin caused by carbohydrates. Increasing protein foods and avoiding simple carbohydrates (breads, cereals, cookies, sugar, etc.) can help balance and increase energy and health. Drink a protein shake in the morning. A simple protein shake made with a high-quality protein powder, soy or almond milk, and perhaps a banana can be a real quick and healthy meal.

5. Eat your vegetables

This is the number one thing that you can do to improve your health. I particularly love leafy green vegetables, including spinach, kale, and chard. Leafy greens and other vegetables like broccoli are full of healthy compounds that fight cancer, boost your immune system and keep your bones strong.

6. Cook your own food

Cooking your own food takes a bit of planning, but many foods are simple and easy to prepare. Plan your meals for the week and start building your repertoire of quick and easy recipes you like. Processed foods are usually heated to very high temperatures which have adverse effects on molecular structure and vitamin content. Processed foods often contain preservatives, additives and colorings.

7. Switch to non-gluten grains

For many people, gluten causes a host of problems. Non-gluten grains include rice, corn, millet, quinoa, and amaranth. Gluten grains include wheat, barley, oats, and rye.

8. Avoid allergenic foods

The most common allergenic foods include milk, wheat, egg, corn, peanut, banana, beef, cheese, orange juice and soy. Other allergens are food additives, yellow dye #5, pollen, sugar, chocolate, yeast, spices, onion, and eggs. If you're unsure of what your food allergies are see your Naturopathic physician for testing.

9. Avoid foods high in arachidonic acid

Arachidonic acid is a major cause of inflammation. Foods high in arachidonic acid are red meat, pork and all forms of dairy.

10. Buy foods in the grocery store from the periphery of the store

Most of the foods in the center of the store are packaged and processed. Buy the bulk of your food from the produce section and the meat counter. Always go shopping with a list of the foods and ingredients you will need for your meals for the week. Write your menu on a dry erase board on the refrigerator so you know what's inside and what you can make with it.