

BE HEALTHY.

LIFE™

FOR



Article contributed by Dr. Eric Plasker, Marietta, GA

Winter has come and gone, and most likely, so have people's New Year commitments to losing those extra pounds. But with summer just around the corner, there is no better time than now to reinvigorate a healthy lifestyle. A nutritious, well-rounded diet is the key to achieving total body health. Regular exercise is pivotal for battling stress and strengthening your body, but a nutrient-rich diet is necessary to ensure lifelong health and to promote weight loss. This spring, revamp your diet by including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein and see how these simple additions will help you shed those pounds and put a bounce back in your step.

Proven Diet Success

The most effective diets are not really diets at all, but lifestyle changes. Focus on the positive aspects of your diet. Try to maintain a mindset that focuses on what you *should* eat rather than what you *should not* eat. Make your diet goal about fostering a healthier lifestyle and not simply about losing weight. Know that it is ok to indulge every now and then. A small treat should not be something to agonize over, nor should it be considered a diet failure. Eat slowly, so that your body can register when you are full before you begin to overeat. Your diet should feel healthy and satisfying, not painful and depraving. With these positive mindsets, the chances of sticking with a diet and achieving a healthy, 100 year lifestyle are significantly higher.

Don't Starve, Satisfy

This spring, change what you eat and feel healthier and more energized. Drink plenty of hydrating liquids, and eat six smaller meals a day, or three larger meals with small snacks in between. Whatever you do, don't starve yourself. If your stomach is growling, it most likely

means your body needs food. Try reaching for fresh fruits and vegetables before committing to that tasty-looking candy bar. Berries and leafy greens are high in fiber, so they fill you up with fewer calories. Fiber takes longer for our bodies to digest, so you will feel fuller for longer. Also, trade out that calorie-packed cheeseburger for some lean protein like chicken, soy, tofu, or wild salmon, and pass on the white baguette for some whole grain breads. These minor changes will supply your body with the nutritional edge necessary to feel healthier and more energized, and will encourage successful and sustainable weight loss as you strive to reach your goals.

Stay Fresh

It's time to ditch the old, winter menu with those heavy, calorie-packed comfort foods. This spring, introduce lighter, more nutrient-rich foods into your diet. And with so many fresh fruits and vegetables in season, this diet shift has never been easier.

Of course you can find good fruits and vegetables at the supermarket, but you can also opt for more local (and often organic) options at a farmers' market. Better yet, plant a small garden in your yard. Opt for easy-to-grow produce like tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers. These fruits and vegetables do not require much labor or care. Also, adding herbs like chives, basil, and parsley to your garden gives you a way to add fresh flavor to your warm-weather inspired dishes.

So spice up that chicken breast with some rosemary and thyme, or make pesto out of basil and toss it with some roasted vegetables. Whatever you choose, fresh herbs and spices are sure to keep your fresh diet from feeling bland.