Gazelle Sports

Eat Your Way to Better Health

What makes foods whole? Fruits, vegetables; whole grains, (such as brown rice, whole wheat, bulgur and quinoa; plus nuts, beans and lentils); wild salmon, olive oil, organic or grass fed beef, organic, free-range chicken; milk and yogurt without additives produced from animals that have not been given hormones. While foods provide the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that your body needs to help fight disease and protect against aging. By eating whole/fresh foods instead of processed high-fat, high-cholesterol foods and snacks, you get more fiber, complex carbohydrates, power nutrients, and good fats.

Switching is easier than you think. Here are **eight simple ways to shop smarter and eat healthier:**

1. Whenever possible, buy fresh/whole foods. Fill your fridge with the freshest produce; it's loaded antioxidants. Frozen and can products without added ingredients/preservatives are also acceptable. Find farm-fresh eggs, fish and cheeses; and naturally raised chicken and meats without antibiotics, hormones, or animal by-products.

2. Color your diet healthy. Instead of eating the same old fruits and vegetables everyday, expand your palate and your palette. Varieties that are red (cranberries), yellow (papayas), orange (peppers), and blue-purple (blueberries) are loaded with antioxidants. Leafy greens (such as kale and chard) and yellow-orange foods (butternut squash and carrots) contains vitamin A and calcium and are rich in carotenoids and other phytochemicals that boost the immune system, help prevent damage to cells, and protect against cancer and heart disease. Red and blue-purple foods (beets, grapes) contain anthocyanins (a type of flavonoid), which help prevent diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Try to eat nine servings of colorful fruits and vegetables a day. It's not as intimidating as it sounds, one serving is just one-half cup.

3. While shopping stick to the perimeter of the store. This is where you'll find most whole foods: produce, dried fruit and nuts, fresh fish and meats, diary, and freshly baked whole-grain bread. The inner aisles are loaded with processed foods. Enter the danger zone only for such staples as heart-healthy extra-virgin olive oil and oats (and other whole grains) and canned goods with no added salt/preservatives; skip the snack aisle altogether. Although typically it's best to buy fresh, there are still benefits to can (i.e. Lycopene that is found in tomato

products and other antioxidants that are found in fruit and vegetable juices) and frozen foods also as long as they do not have any added ingredients.

4. Load up on whole grains. They contain the antioxidants and phytochemicals that are stripped out of white bread and pasta. Look for whole wheat breads with whole grains as their first ingredient and at least two grams of fiber per slice. Try whole wheat pasta, for extra vitamins, fiber and earthy flavor. In addition to brown and wild rice, try high-protein quinoa and cracked-wheat bulgur for pilafs. (However most white pastas still have at least 2 grams of fiber preserving. So as long as you are sticking to the serving size pasta isn't all that bad!)

5. Follow the thumbnail rule for packaged foods. Even organic or natural foods can sometimes contain lots of ingredients, an indication that they're far from their whole food state. An easy test: Measure the ingredient list next to your thumbnail. If the list is longer than your mail (less than an inch) and contains anything you don't recognize or can't pronounce, take a pass. Remember the less ingredients usually the better.

6. Give breakfast a boost. Sprinkle ground flaxseed (a great source of heart-protective alpha-linoleic acid) over oatmeal or whole-grain toast with peanut butter and honey. Keep frozen berries, bananas, and cherries in your freezer, blend with orange juice and yogurt for a smoothie.

7. Snack smart. Switch from chips and pretzels to a homemade trail mix of salted, roasted almonds and pumpkin seeds (which contain healthy fats), and dried cranberries and raisins (which are loaded with concentrated antioxidants). Swap peanut butter crackers from the vending machine, which are full of trans fats for a natural peanut butter on apple slices.

8. Make over your dinner. Stir-fry cherry tomato halves and minced garlic in extra-virgin olive oil. Toss with whole wheat angel-hair pasta and a handful of arugula. Top with shavings of Parmesan cheese. Or make a colorful stir-fry with red bell pepper, eggplant, summer squash, and broccoli served over brown rice. Toss hot roasted sweet potatoes with red onion, baby spinach, a dash of balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper. Enjoy!