WEEK 1 – CARBS

dynamicwellness®

Greetings!

Welcome to Week 1 of the Dynamic Wellness Challenge™ Sneak Peek.

This week's Challenge is designed to help you understand why eating lots of fruits and vegetables, and other good carbs – like nuts, whole grains, and beans – is very important for good health. Of course, if you're already eating plenty of these, congratulations!

The Truth About Carbs

Many people are confused about carbohydrates, and with good reason. After decades of "low-fat" diet advice, along came the "low-carb" diet craze, which failed to differentiate between good, healthy carbs we need – found in natural foods – and the processed sugars and starches we should try to limit. Now we are being told that the low-carb craze is over. Which means what?

Let's look at what carbs are. Simply put, carbohydrates are sugar! When we eat them, they are first broken down through digestion and then enter our bloodstream as a simple sugar called glucose, which is the body's main source of fuel. Glucose keeps our cells functioning and keeps us moving, breathing, and thinking clearly. We need carbs, but also have to understand they can be good or bad, depending on how fast they break down into blood sugar. Slow is good; fast is bad. It all has to do with the interaction of blood sugar and the hormone, insulin.

Our bodies are only able to use blood sugar for fuel with the help of insulin. Think of insulin as an escort that brings glucose to the cells that need it and then opens the doors to those cells, allowing the sugar to enter and be burned as fuel. Insulin's main job is to make sure we have enough circulating glucose . . . but not too much.

The Blood Sugar / Insulin Roller Coaster

Good, slow-digesting carbs (like vegetables and whole grains) break down into glucose very slowly and enter the blood steam a little at a time. This gradual entry has a minimal effect on our insulin levels, and we are able to efficiently utilize the sugar for fuel. In contrast, fast-digesting processed carbs (like a candy bar, bagel, or white rice) break down into glucose in less than 10 minutes. This causes a rapid spike in our blood sugar, followed by an equally rapid spike in insulin. Not a good thing.

If there is more glucose in our blood than we need for fuel, insulin stores the excess as FAT – especially around our midsection! This is the type of fat most closely associated with Type II diabetes and heart disease.

There is another problem with fast-digesting carbs. As insulin works to clear the glucose overload they cause, it can cause our blood sugar to drop to below normal levels, leaving us feeling tired and hungry. (Have you ever nodded off at the computer at 10:00am after a breakfast of a bagel or donut?) When this happens, many people reach for a "pick-me-up" of more processed carbs – donut, cookies, soda. This starts a blood sugar/insulin roller coaster that results in weight gain and a host of other health problems, such as Type II diabetes, heart disease, and even Alzheimer's. It also speeds up the aging process and depresses the immune system

We recommend eating mostly slow-digesting carbs. They contain fiber, which helps to slow digestion and stabilize our blood sugar, and also significant amounts of vitamins and powerful antioxidants that help protect our cells from damage and disease.

Sugar, Sugar Everywhere!

Sugar is the number one food additive in processed foods and beverages. Even if you don't have much of a sweet tooth, you may be eating a lot more sugar than you realize. Added sugar appears on food ingredient labels under many names including high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, lactose, maltose, honey, fruit juice concentrate, brown sugar, and molasses.

dynAmicwellness®

Over the past few decades, Americans have become insatiable consumers of sugar. The USDA reports that our total consumption of caloric sweeteners increased 33% between 1960 and 2000. This means that Americans are now consuming 30 teaspoons of added sugar per person per DAY – or almost 2 pounds per week! Kind of shocking, isn't it? No wonder we have weight and health problems!

We are all aware that sugars are added to products like sweetened soda and other beverages, cookies, cakes, sweetened cereals (especially kid's cereals), candy, and ice cream. But in bologna? You bet! It's also in many processed foods such as bread, spaghetti sauce, ketchup, "healthy" breakfast cereal, salad dressing, lunchmeat and hot dogs, mayonnaise (especially low-fat and fat-free), crackers, soup, flavored yogurt, microwavable products, and packaged dinner mixes. It's a really good idea to read the nutritional and ingredient labels!

High-Fructose Corn Syrup – A Toxic Sugar?

High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a super-sweet low-cost sugar, entered our food supply in the 1970s. It is a highly processed, chemically-altered form of corn syrup.

Our consumption of soft drinks, most of which are sweetened with HCFS, has increased by 40 percent since 1980 – to 440 12-ounce cans per year per person – according to the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service. HCFS is also in just about every processed or packaged food we consume – canned foods, cookies, cakes, baked goods, spaghetti sauce, and frozen foods.

It is a source of empty calories that don't contain vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, or fiber. It has no nutritional value except calories!

- It is digested, absorbed and metabolized differently from regular sugar.
- Unlike sugar, fructose does not need insulin to enter our body's cells and it does not prompt production of certain hormones that help regulate appetite and fat storage.
- It also produces elevated levels of triglycerides that researchers have linked to an increased risk of heart disease.

From 1980 to 2000, America's incidence of obesity doubled, after having remained relatively flat for the preceding 20 years. Could high-fructose corn syrup be making us fat? Well, maybe, since per capita consumption of HCFS increased by more than 1,000 percent from 1970 to 1990, exceeding the changes in the intake of any other food group tracked by the Department of Agriculture. Scientists are still debating this issue but our recommendation is to look for HFCS on labels and avoid it when possible.

The Risk of Insulin Resistance

When we eat a diet high in "fast" carbs, over time the body's ability to deal with all this glucose and insulin starts to wear down. Insulin becomes less able to move the blood sugar into our cells to be used for fuel so blood sugar levels remain high. This is called "Insulin Resistance," and it can lead to Type II diabetes and other health problems.

It also leads to weight gain because the body keeps trying to lower the blood sugar by making even more insulin. Unfortunately, insulin continues to perform its other task of storing glucose as fat, especially around our mid-section.

Even more importantly, new research is finding that high levels of insulin are linked to heart attacks, strokes, several kinds of cancer, and even Alzheimer's disease. It is estimated that insulin resistance may affect at least 1 in 3 American adults.

Two Prudential Plaza, 180 N Stetson, Suite 5100, Chicago, IL 60601
312-276-5150, info@dynamicwellness.com, www.dynamicwellness.com