

Eat Vegetables First

I always think of Dr. Seuss's Green Eggs and Ham when I am sharing the benefits of vegetables with clients and friends. There is often so much resistance. Can't you just see it? "Could you, would you?" and the famous reply... "But I do not like them, ..."

On my personal journey, the most difficult emotional shift I needed to make around food was to move meat from the center of my plate and replace it with amazing, nutrient dense vegetables. It was difficult only because of the mindset I'd had my entire life. When it came to considering what to make for dinner, I always started with the meat. My thoughts went something like, "What am I going to make for dinner? Well, chicken and potatoes and green beans." I needed to shift this habit to be, "What am I going to make for dinner? Roots and shoots with a side of quinoa topped with a small slice of chicken breast." You see, the meat became the optional side. It felt difficult only because of the thought pattern. Once I made the shift in my mind, the rest was easy.

We are just beginning to understand the role vegetables can play in our well-being. Nutrition is a young, complex, and ever evolving science. What we do know is that plant foods offer a diverse and deep well of nutrition that supports our body in creating energy, fighting off cancer, preventing early aging, and aiding our digestive tract. Vegetables also help us to have clear skin and sleep better, and they seem to prevent a myriad of diseases. Every vegetable offers something slightly different, but the nutrients in each plant work together synergistically in a way we cannot yet recreate in a lab. What does this mean? There is really no substitute for the real thing.

As an example, a single cup of spinach holds 888.5 mcg (micrograms) of vitamin K, 14742.0 IU of vitamin A, 1.7 mg of

manganese, and 262.4 mcg of folate. It also contains amazing amounts of magnesium, iron, vitamin C, riboflavin, calcium, (where do you think elephants get their calcium from anyway?), potassium, B6, tryptophan, fiber, copper, B1, protein, phosphorus, zinc, vitamin E, omega 3 fatty acids, niacin, selenium, beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. (Mateljan, 2007)

Adding vegetables to your diet can make a huge impact on how you feel and on your ability to reach your health and wellness goals. If you would like to focus on nutrient density, the ANDI food scoring guide will help you to choose foods with an amazing nutrient power pack. The trick here is diversity. Try mixing up your vegetables and changing up how you prepare them. In the beginning, you might feel resistant, the flavors and textures might be different than what you are used to, but by sticking with it, you and your taste buds will adapt. Whole, natural, foods have flavors that vary as widely as their colors – sometimes it's in the preparation and sometimes it's in the season and growing location.

Try this exercise:

Adding vegetables to your plate at every meal can be incredibly impactful. This will be a trial to identify what it feels like to have them more often and in greater amounts. As you work through the vegetables, if after a few tries you absolutely do not like a certain one, don't force yourself to eat it. We don't have to like all foods and by pushing ourselves to eat foods we dislike, we are trying to create an unsustainable habit. (I know I can't stick with eating things I don't like for very long so it's okay if you can't either.)

Begin by visiting the ANDI food scoring guide and choose a vegetable or two that you'd like to add to your plate over the next two weeks.

Take Action & Schedule It!

1. What food(s) did you choose?
2. Where will you get it?
3. When will you get it?
4. How will you prepare it?
5. How many times will you have it?

Write your plans for your meals and track your food in a personal journal.

At the end of 14 days, come back and answer these questions:

1. What did you try?
2. How did you prepare it?
3. What was your favorite way of having it?
4. How often did you eat it?
5. How do you feel?

Bringing awareness to your experience allows you to practice listening to your body and what's working and what's not. Watch for subtle shifts, greater energy, reduction of mind fog, and less bloating.

This article is an excerpt from *Lessons for MomPositive Living, Attainable Wellness for Modern Moms* written by Tammi Hoerner, INHC. This book is available for purchase here.

Recommended Reading:

- *80% Raw Food Diet*