Fitness VS Health – Sorry, Coke, Pepsi, but You Can't Out-Exercise Junk Food

For most people, living a healthy lifestyle is no easy task. Being healthy involves a few hundred decisions every single day about what and where to eat, how to exercise, what medicines or vitamins are necessary, and so much more. Even talking about healthy eating isn't easy. Food has so much associated context and culture that discussing a healthy diet can be as tricky as conversations about religion or politics.

Don't think so? Put a vegan, paleo eater, and the average American in a room and watch them go to war over their food philosophies. It's not that one person is right and the others are wrong; they each have a completely different belief about what constitutes a healthy diet.

In his book and recent documentary, *In Defense of Food*, Michael Pollan goes into great detail explaining how different foods (processed and unprocessed) affect the body and how "nutritionism" (a focus on individual nutrients rather than the food itself) has derailed our understanding of food. The result has been decades of focusing on fat, cholesterol, fiber, vitamins, antioxidants, or calories, which has left humans fatter, sicker, and more confused than ever.

The mantras "Eat less, exercise more," " Balance energy," and "Everything in moderation," have brainwashed generations of Americans into believing they can eat whatever they want as long as they exercise enough to "burn it off." The problem is, this doesn't work.

Last year, a conglomeration of beverage companies created a campaign called MyMixify to convince kids that they can "mixify" their lives by "balancing" some activity with a

sports drink or sugary juice beverage. High-fructose corn syrup, the form of sugar found in most commercial sodas, sports drinks, and fruit drinks today, has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the liver and to increase insulin resistance and it is associated with type-2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Even zero calorie “diet” beverages have been shown to negatively affect the intestinal microbiome and raise blood sugar in the process.

By perpetuating the premise that a calorie equals a calorie, that a calorie from a nutritious vegetable is the equal of a calorie from high fructose corn syrup, processed food companies avoid any responsibility for the food they create, placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the consumers. It’s not the highly processed, incredibly addictive, preservative and sugar-filled, artificially colored and flavored substances that are the problem, it’s that you are not running 10 miles daily to burn it off! “Don’t blame us!” they say.

Sorry, Coke and Pepsi, but you can’t out exercise junk food.

Quality Matters

Most people who change their diets from a standard American diet to paleo, vegetarian, vegan or similar diets see significant changes to their health largely due to the removal of processed foods. (If they actually stick with it, of course.) Those who change their diets but continue to eat processed foods, generally do not see the same benefits. The reason is that the human body does not treat all foods the same. Everything gets digested and responded to by hormones differently, depending upon the type of food, quality of ingredient(s), and composition of nutrients.

In his book, *The Dorito Effect*, author Mark Schatzker dives into the world of flavor and its impact on nutrition and our health. Flavor isn’t just a bonus; it actually tells us what’s

in the food we're eating. The fruits, vegetables, and even animals we're consuming today are being bred for speed to market and shelf stability, not flavor. The results are foods that have less nutritional value and less flavor than foods traditionally raised. Taste a fresh tomato fresh from the garden, then taste one "fresh" from the grocery store. The difference is like night and day. One has grown into full ripeness on the vine and is bursting with life and flavor, the other was picked while still green, trucked across the country and treated with ethylene gas to "ripen" before it is brought to the store. It has a mealy, cardboard-like texture and flavor.

So Which Would You Rather Eat?

Eat food. Don't eat too much. Eat mostly plants.
Conversely, quality helps moderate the amount we eat as well. When was the last time you overate a plate of salmon or broccoli or eggs? Can't recall? What about a bag of chips? Or a bottle of soda? Foods that are created to be devoured mindlessly like chips or soda are incredibly easy to over consume. They are high in "flavor" (mostly from chemical additives) but low in nutrition, so your body wants to keep eating, thinking that some nutrition has to be in there somewhere. Sadly, it isn't. But with real food that is full of flavor *and* nutritional value, you don't need to eat as much to feel full and satisfied because your body is actually receiving both a nutritious *and* delicious meal.

To bring this philosophy back to health and the daily decisions consumers make, a movement toward real food is growing in America. Enlightened consumers don't want the Monsanto bred corn grain or factory farmed meats from the slaughterhouse. To put it simply, they want quality not quantity.

Michael Pollan's take away from *In Defense of Food* is to

follow these simple rules:

- Eat food.
- Don’t eat too much.
- Eat mostly plants.

Whatever your dietary preference, we couldn’t agree more. Whether you’re paleo, vegetarian, vegan, low carb or just want to be healthy, these are words to live by.

While tracking calories may be a part of your healthy lifestyle, focusing only on calorie counts will not create a healthier life. Obsessing over one aspect of a food isn’t healthy. Instead, focus on quality whole foods (non-processed foods) and enjoy. Your body will take care of the rest!

So What To Do Now?

When cooking at home, it’s quite easy to regulate what goes onto your plate. When dining out, however, do you really know what’s going on behind the curtain? In order to extend this real food philosophy to the dining world, Tasteful App (available on iOS and Google Play) ranks restaurants based on the quality of their ingredients and the benefits for certain types of diet. So no matter where or how you’re eating, you can make truly healthy decisions.

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- *Detox Cheap and Easy Without Fasting – Recipes Included*
- *Healthy Sugar Alternatives and More*
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