

Natural Nutrition Now



A Simple Guide to Healthy Eating

By Samantha Flower

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Foreword

I first met Samantha Flower when she joined the Kevala Centre as a student. These days I'm proud to know her as one of our most popular tutors and I'm glad to call her a personal friend.

It's therefore a great pleasure to introduce this, her excellent introduction to nutrition, and typical of Sam, it's well researched, easy to understand and good, no-nonsense, valuable information.

I sincerely hope you find it as enjoyable and valuable as I have to read and I am sure you will have no difficulty in understanding why I am recommending it to all our holistic therapy students, not just students of nutrition; nutrition after all, is so key to good health.

Should you wish to take your interest in nutrition further, do call me to discuss which of our courses would suit you best or visit: www.kevala.com

Jacqueline Nicholls-White

Head of Learning Development, The Kevala Centre

About the Author



Hello, I'm Samantha Flower and I am a practising Nutritional Therapist, Iridologist and Lecturer. I operate from a busy clinic based at the Haelan Centre in Crouch End, North London.

In addition to my clinical practice I also lecture at The Kevala Centre, where I once studied. I tutor on 3 courses: *Nutritional Therapy*, *Integrated Health Management* and a course which I wrote myself: *Detoxification: A Maintenance Plan for Healthy Living*. I currently run open house nutrition and healthy living weekend seminars, both in Torquay and London.

I have written this booklet because I feel there is a general need for good, sound nutritional facts. Through my practice people will often come to me with strange ideas about nutrition. There appears to be a lot of confusion surrounding the issues of healthy eating.

Although I think it is great that we have so much information at our disposal, I also feel that we sometimes suffer from 'information overload' and that a lot of the information available can be somewhat misleading; some is downright inaccurate.

One of the reasons nutrition excites me so much is because it is a constantly-evolving field. However, the fundamental facts regarding food quality and the body's requirements have not changed. This booklet is based on a natural approach to eating, it is a return to the basic principles that kept generations healthy and robust before us

Enjoy!

Samantha Flower

Introduction

The Modern Attitude to Food

In modern Western culture the latest diet craze tends to dictate our relationship with food. Indeed the practice of 'dieting' has become a commonplace activity in a society increasingly obsessed with body-image. Bookshop shelves literally heave under the weight of titles promising sleeker, fitter, healthier physiques. But at what cost to our health? The diversity of such diet regimes can be far-ranging. Their popularity also tends to change with the seasons. It is easy to see how our attitude to food has become confused by the conflicting information available to us.

On the whole, the modern relationship with food is a far from healthy one. Media influence has helped cloud our perception of the true function and purpose of food in our lives. We seem to have lost sight of the real question: 'Are any of these 'diets' any good for us?' Confusion aside, the answer is really quite simple. Our bodies were designed to function on natural, whole foods. In evolutionary terms, very little has changed. We still need carbohydrates to provide our energy, proteins to build and repair our cells, and fats to maintain our nervous system. We also need vitamins and minerals to help facilitate these processes. It is no accident that all that is found in nature can provide for our bodily needs.

This booklet has been designed to re-introduce you to the benefits and pleasures of eating for health. By understanding the fundamental aspects of good nutrition, our modern perception of dieting will become a thing of the past. It is my intention to help you discover how to sustain good levels of health, thus enabling you to enjoy a happy and fulfilling life. This is easily achievable through the choices you make when selecting your foods. I invite you to join me on a journey into the exciting world of nutrition. Bon appetite!

“Stay close to nature & its eternal laws will protect you.”

Max Gerson, M.D.

Food Quality - The Key to Healthy Living

Go Organic! – The Whole Food Way

The key factor in healthy eating concerns the standard of the foods that we eat. Quality is fast becoming an overriding concern. Sadly we live in an age where food additives and processed meals are commonplace. The phenomenal increase in food sensitivities can be attributed in large part to the detrimental chemicals added to our foods. Buying organic ensures that we are consuming 'clean' foods, untainted by added 'nasties'. The success of the organic movement has highlighted the increasing demand for healthier produce. Unfortunately many food manufacturers have jumped on the 'organic bandwagon'. Often people may think they are making the healthy choice in opting for certain foods simply because they are marketed as 'organic'. However many of these foods can still contain appreciable amounts of unnecessary and detrimental additives, including sugar or salt. This is why it is always best to read food labels before making a purchase. (Items to watch out for will be discussed later in the booklet.)

The consumer also needs to watch out for organic foods of the *refined* variety. These are not Whole Foods. Whole foods are 'complete' foods which contain all the nutritional factors that make them beneficial, as designed by nature.

These foods are the missing link in the average 21st Century diet. Lack of such food is the major contributing cause for our population's declining health. Brown rice is an example of a whole food. White rice is the refined version. Removal of the husk, bran and germ from the whole rice grain results in a food deficient in vital nutrients. Refined foods should be avoided as they are low in health-giving properties and they promote nutritional deficiencies. We will look at this in greater detail in the section on Whole Grains.

Fresh vegetables and fruits should form the mainstay of any diet, along with a variety of whole grains. I emphasize the vegetables over fruits because on the whole, vegetables are more beneficial in terms of nutrient content. Seeds, nuts and the various vegetable/seed/nut oils are also important additions to the diet. Many people are deficient in the vital fats contained in seeds and nuts as the average Western diet tends to be lacking in these foods. The same can be said of fish. The cold water variety is extremely beneficial. Again, the average Westerner does not tend to consume much fish.

If eaten, meat should be consumed in moderation. In the West, we tend to eat far too much animal protein. In excess, meat will contribute greatly to inflammatory conditions such as eczema and asthma. This can lead on to

more severe conditions including arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis. Meat quality is also a big issue. We live in an age where commercial animal foods are pumped full of toxic chemicals. As with other food additives, these will have an adverse effect on our health. When choosing meat, always go for the organic and/or free-range options. Legumes (beans and pulses) provide another healthy protein source.

Basically, a healthy diet should include a wide variety of different, 'clean' whole foods.

“Life in all its fullness is this Mother Nature obeyed.”

Dr Weston A. Price

Get Raw! - The Fresher the Better

By far, the healthiest diet is made up of home-prepared fresh, organic produce. It is important to include some raw foods on a daily basis. Some people are able to live solely on raw foods. Others require some cooked foods in their diet. The benefits of raw foods are innumerable. No food is as powerfully healing as fresh, raw juice. Juices (particularly vegetable juices) are highly cleansing and nutritious. They provide fluids, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, phytochemicals, herbals and even quantities of protein, in a highly assimilable form. This means that the body is able to absorb and use the maximum levels of nutrients present. Raw juices form an essential part of nutritional healing for degenerative diseases and are a great nutrient source for those recuperating from illness.

Sprouts are another highly nutritious option. (Not your Brussels sprouts, but the sprouted beans/seeds/grains.) They are living foods which contain a rich source of vitamins and minerals and, most importantly, enzymes. Enzymes enable the body to digest the nutrients in our foods without exhausting the body's own resources. They are present in many raw and 'living foods' such as sprouts and fresh juices. Enzymes are the 'Chemical Sparks of Life'. Without them, many body processes simply could not function. Enzyme-rich foods also slow down the aging

process – another good reason to include them in your diet!

Cooked produce can also be rich in vitamin and mineral content, depending on how it has been prepared. Foods with labels which state 'added vitamins or minerals' should be regarded with suspicion. The addition of vitamins and minerals suggests that the food was originally lacking in vital nutrients. Any whole food will contain the correct balance of vitamins and minerals required by the body, just as nature intended. In order to maximize your nutrient intake it is beneficial to eat seasonally. Produce grown in its peak season is always richer in nutritional value in comparison to produce grown out of season.

“The body needs nutrition through which it is bound to nature.”


Max Gerson, M.D.

The Benefits of Whole Grains

Whole grains are complex carbohydrates. Carbohydrates provide the energy which is essential for the body to function. The many grains available contain varying levels of nutrients which can help support a variety of conditions. Unlike simple carbohydrates (refined grains), complex carbohydrates help to maintain healthy blood sugar levels. This makes them especially useful in managing conditions such as hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and diabetes.

A whole grain consists of the bran, germ, endosperm and exosperm. Together all parts of the grain provide B vitamins, proteins, fats and minerals. The bran is an excellent source of the fibre required to maintain a healthy digestive system. Whole grains provide *complete* nourishment when eaten in combination with legumes or vegetables.

Unfortunately the modern food market is awash with refined grain products. White flour and white bread are classic examples. These foods contain elements of the original whole grain. They have been put through a refining process where various nutritious and health-giving aspects of the grain have been removed. Food manufacturers feel that this processing will make their products appear more 'appetising'. Foods made using refined grains lack vital nutrients and, if eaten with regularity, will result in ill



health. An example is the disease beriberi, which developed after the process of milling was first introduced in the Far East. Rice is consumed as a staple food in Asian countries. Milling removes the outer husks from rice (or any grain) taking with it vital sources of vitamin B1. (The outcome of this process is the white rice which is commonly available today.) As a consequence of this newly introduced system, the Asian population began suffering from vitamin B1 deficiency symptoms. These include psychological disturbances such as depression and physical ailments such as muscle paralysis.

Many refined foods, such as commercial breakfast cereals, state that they have been *fortified* with B vitamins and iron. This is because they are required to meet government specifications. These were put in place to prevent nutritional deficiencies occurring as a result of refined food consumption. If you think about it, the removal of vital nutrients during refining, only to have to replace them by means of artificial processing, is a truly bizarre practice! But this is the only way that manufacturers are able to produce their more 'appetising' product while adhering to government guidelines. The result of this processing has a detrimental health effect on the consumer. The body is incapable of absorbing these altered foods in the same way it would with foods consumed in their natural state. A whole grain, untampered with by artificial processing,

contains the vital balance of nutrients essential to good health, in the required quantities, as supplied by nature.

Grains and the Western diet

Most people tend to stick to wheat or rice as their main source of carbohydrate. However there are many other types of grain which can enhance and enrich your diet. Each grain contains unique qualities in addition to those outlined above. Here are some examples for you to experiment with:

Top 10 Useful Whole Grains

Amaranth – High in protein. Useful in a vegetarian diet.

Barley – Rich in potassium, sulphur and phosphorus. Stimulates the liver and lymphatic system.

Buckwheat – High in vitamin E and Calcium. A good blood builder, helps strengthen arteries. Beneficial for people with heart conditions.


Corn – High in zinc. Helps build immunity.

Millet – High in protein and iron. Also high in lecithin and choline which helps reduce cholesterol levels and prevents gallstones.

Oats – High in many minerals. Helps stabilise blood sugar levels. Promotes stamina and bodily warmth. Boosts slow thyroid function.

Quinoa – The highest protein source of all grains. Helps build strength and endurance.

Rice – A complete protein when combined with beans or vegetables. Useful in a low fat diet. Helps reduce cholesterol levels.



Rye – High in lysine (useful for growth and tissue repair). Promotes a healthy glandular system. Aids in weight loss.

Spelt – Contains all 8 essential amino acids. Helps lower cholesterol and prevents blood clots. Generally tolerated by those with a wheat allergy.

Unnecessary Additives

After the Second World War, processed foods became increasingly popular in the Western diet. Their convenience appeals to those entrenched in the typical lifestyle patterns of 21st Century living. Supermarket shelves are stacked high with pre-packed ready meals, and there remain precious few towns untainted by the presence of a fast food outlet. But whereas our food has been modified to adapt to our fast-paced lives, our bodies' requirements remain unchanged. We need highly nutritious foods to provide the fuel for us to be healthy – a factor sorely lacking in today's average processed meal. Along with poor quality ingredients, food additives are the key culprits.

Most people are unaware that their average commercial burger or sausage comes laced with a catalogue of artificial substances. The more enlightened may think their chicken tikka pre-packaged, ready meal is the healthier option, but they should think again. A glance at the ingredients listing on either of these products will often reveal unrecognisable names of food preservatives, flavourings and/or colourings. These artificial additives have been included in order to enhance flavour and prolong the shelf life of products.

As isolated substances, additives no longer exist in their natural forms even if they were previously extracted from a natural food. Therefore the body is unable to process

them in they usual way. This puts a heavy strain on the liver and the digestive system. (Your two most important organs of detoxification.) In addition, many of these substances are capable of causing mild to serious allergic or intolerant reactions. Of the hundreds of additives used in processed foods, many do not cause serious detrimental effects. However remember that the body was designed to function at optimum levels through the consumption of natural foods. It therefore makes sense that in order to maintain good health, food additives consumption should be kept to a minimum.


Sugar and Sweeteners

Sugar is the most commonly used additive in the food industry today. The average person obtains 500-600 of their daily calories through its consumption. In its beneficial form, natural sugar can be obtained from carbohydrate foods. It is the body's main source of energy. Whole foods containing natural sugars provide a slow release of energy which will last throughout the day. They also provide vitamins, minerals and proteins, which help stabilise blood sugar levels, aid with digestion, and regulate mood. Refined sugars can provide a quick release of energy. However this is not a sustainable source and will inevitably result in slumps and mood swings. Sugar is responsible for the overwhelming cases of hypoglycemia and diabetes which are so prevalent today. It is also the leading cause of tooth decay and obesity in the Western world. Refined sugars lower immunity and are a proven factor in the almost epidemic spread of Candida yeast overgrowth which is rife in the 21st Century. This condition is thought to be the precursor to all degenerative and serious diseases, such as Cancer.

There are many sources of sugar which can be found as part of whole foods or as extracts which have been added to processed products. These are a few examples: maltose (found in maltodextrin, dextrans and dextrose), lactose, sucrose, glucose, fructose, honey, molasses and various

syrups. Sorbitol, Mannitol and Xylitol are naturally occurring sugar alcohols.

Refined sugar can be found in almost all processed foods such as carbonated drinks, fruit drinks, frozen and ready meals, breads, cereals and canned produce. Natural sugars may be acceptable in moderation but it is important to keep sugar consumption to a minimum where possible. Becoming familiar with the different forms of sugars and sweeteners will enable you to check food labels and assess sugar levels in a product. Chances are, you will be shocked by what you discover, particularly where processed foods are concerned! Moderate use of whole, unrefined, evaporated cane sugar (such as Rapadura) is recommended in place of refined sugar. However natural sweeteners such as agave syrup, barley malt, brown rice syrup, barley syrup, blackstrap molasses and herbal sweeteners such as stevia are by far the healthier option. Blackstrap molasses are rich in iron and minerals and agave syrup, barley malt, brown rice syrup and stevia can be used by those suffering from hypoglycemia and diabetes. In general it is best to eliminate the taste for added sweeteners (even naturally-sourced varieties) by reducing consumption of such foods. Sugar is not a necessity in the human diet and is easily obtainable provided you are consuming complex carbohydrates.



In addition to the food-based sugars chemically manufactured sweeteners such as Acesulfame K, Aspartame and Saccharin also exist. These have become popular additives in processed diet food and drinks. These non-nutritive substances are about two hundred times as sweet as sugar and contain no calories, hence their current popularity. However they have been linked to a catalogue of adverse symptoms. These range from headaches and dizziness, to seizures and tumour growth. They have also proven to be carcinogenic (Cancer-causing) to animals. As they are unnatural in composition, the body has difficulty in assimilating them and treats them as a toxin. These should be strictly avoided.

Flavourings

There are over 3000 flavourings in use today. Unlike other additives, it is not a requirement to list flavourings on food labels. As they are used in small quantities it is generally assumed that they will not cause detrimental effects. Statistically, there has been little evidence of flavourings causing harm. However, some flavourings are known to be extremely toxic when consumed in large quantities. Those at risk of developing a reaction include people consuming large amounts of crisps, confectionary and soft drinks. These junk foods generally contain a cocktail of food additives. Consumption of such 'foods' is on the increase and it is not uncommon for some children to eat such products on a daily basis. As such, cases of food allergy and intolerance are becoming commonplace. These can range from minor skin complaints to behavioural problems.

Flavourings are generally considered to be safe when consumed in small amounts. One exception is the use of monosodium glutamate (MSG). This flavour enhancer is used in poor quality takeaways, processed meat dishes, pre-prepared sauces, packet snacks, processed cheeses, packet/tinned soups, bouillons and consommés. MSG is an amino acid extracted from animal or plant protein. It is responsible for a catalogue of symptoms collectively known as 'Chinese Restaurant Syndrome'. Symptoms can include tightness and pain in the chest radiating to the arms,

palpitations, faintness, sweating, loss of coordination, headaches, and low blood pressure. MSG is also known to trigger asthma attacks in asthmatics. Research shows that it has been implicated in damage to the central nervous system. The body will treat MSG as a toxin. Any products containing these ingredients should be strictly avoided.

Preservatives

Manufacturers use preservatives in order to prevent decay and growth of bacteria in food and to prolong shelf life. Some are known to be detrimental to health, so their use is strictly regulated. Nitrates and nitrites are known to be carcinogenic (cancer causing). Despite this fact, they continue to successfully prevent the growth of toxic microorganisms in meat, so they continue to be used. Other popular preservatives known to cause detrimental side effects include the benzoates and the sulphates. Both have been implicated in skin complaints, asthma, and hyperactivity in children. However, not all preservatives used in food manufacturing have a negative effect. Naturally occurring preservatives such as ascorbic acid and citric acid are used in products to enhance their antioxidant properties. These help stabilise the acidity of food substances and prevent the discolouration of fruit and juices.

Colourings

Food colourings are added to foods to make them more visually appetising. They can be either natural or synthetic in origin. Natural colours can be extracted from grasses and plants or they can be chemically processed. The synthetic colourings (known as azo-dyes) have been the topic of much debate. Popular azo-dyes such as tartrazine and sunset yellow have been implicated in many allergic and intolerant reactions, especially in children. As colourings have a history of causing detrimental effects, they are heavily regulated. Unfortunately Britain permits more artificial colours than any other country in the Western world.

Most additives have been assigned an 'E' number which relates to a coding system. The E stands for EC (European Community). The EC is responsible for testing and approving additives for use in foods. As stated, not all additives/E numbers are detrimental to health. However it is good practice to scan ingredients listings on food products for the presence of E numbers. As a general rule, the fewer the 'E' numbers, the 'cleaner' and healthier the product because it will be a less-processed food.

Unless you have a photographic memory or are an expert in the field it would be impossible to know which E

numbers to avoid. I have compiled a short checklist of the most obvious offenders for your quick reference.

E is for Avoid! – Top 12 Additives to Avoid

Colourings

Quinoline Yellow	E104
Brilliant Blue	E133
Sunset Yellow	E110
Carmoisine	E122
Ponceau 4R	E124
Indigo Carmine	E132

Preservatives

Sodium Benzoate	E211
Sulphur Dioxide	E220

Flavourings

Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)	E621
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Sweeteners

Aspartame	E951
Saccharine	E954
Acesulfame K	E950

For further information on food additives and their relevant E numbers it would be worth your while to obtain a copy of Maurice Hanssen's E for Additives. However, bear in mind that E numbers and additives really have no place in a healthy diet. If you truly want to eat for optimum health the message remains the same: always go for the Whole Food option.

Vitamins and Minerals in Your Food Variety is the Spice of Life

Everybody knows that vitamins and minerals are a crucial aspect of good nutrition. When eating a whole food, organic diet obtaining acceptable levels of quality nutrients shouldn't prove problematic. But even within the healthiest of diets most of us are guilty of not incorporating as wide a range of different foods as we could. As with the grain example given earlier (wheat and rice being an all-too-common staple in the Western diet) we tend to stick to the foods to which we are most accustomed. However the body responds most favourably to change. It is easy to become deficient in a nutrient if it is avoided for long enough. This is why it is so important to try and include a variety of different foods on a daily basis. Where vegetables are concerned, eating what is referred to as a 'rainbow diet' is highly recommended. A rainbow diet includes the full spectrum of different coloured produce available. The different colours correspond with the different health-giving nutrients present in each vegetable.


Your Quick Reference Guide to Vitamins & Minerals

What follows is a reference chart listing the essential nutrients required to sustain a healthy, balanced diet. The best food sources have been listed in descending order of nutrient quantity. i.e. the richest available source of nutrient will be found in the first food. This chart will give you a good idea of the types of nutrients available from your foods. It can help you plan healthy, balanced meals ensuring that you obtain the broad spectrum of nutrients required for good health.

Vitamin	Main Function	Best Food Sources
A	Good night vision, healthy lining of internal organs such as digestive tract, lungs, throat etc., immune support.	Butter, oily fish, liver (only organic), chilli peppers, dandelion root.
Beta-Carotene	Immune support foods rich in carotenoids are high in antioxidants.	Red, yellow & orange vegetables & fruit, green leafy vegetables.
B1 (Thiamine)	Energy production, utilisation of carbohydrates, maintains a healthy nervous system & good digestive function.	Brewer's yeast, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, cereal in general esp. oats, rice & soy.
B2 (Riboflavin)	Energy production, utilisation of all 3 macro nutrients, healthy nervous system.	Brewer's yeast, liver (only organic), cereal, almond, wheat germ, wild rice, tempeh, mushrooms.
B3 (Niacin)	Energy production, blood sugar regulation, healthy skin, eyes & nervous system, supports detoxification, helps control cholesterol levels.	Brewer's yeast, rice, liver (only organic), cereal, seeds & nuts.
B6 (Pantothenic Acid)	Energy production & adrenal support. (Deficiency is rare as it is found in most foods.)	Brewer's yeast, liver (only organic), cereal, wheat bran, sesame, mushrooms.

B6 (Pyridoxine)	Energy production, utilisation of all 3 macro nutrients, healthy nervous system, hormonal balance, immune support.	Brewer's Yeast, tempeh, wheat bran, sunflower seeds, salmon, soy, walnuts, beans & pulses, turkey.
Folic Acid	DNA & red blood cell formation, prevention of neural (nervous system) tube defects in foetuses, bone health.	Brewer's yeast, chicken liver (only organic), black-eye beans, soy flour, wheat bran, beans & pulses, green leafy vegetables.
B12 (Cobalamin)	Energy production, formation of red blood cells, healthy nervous system.	Liver (only organic), oily fish, oysters, seaweed, egg.
C	Healthy connective tissue, bones, gums, teeth, blood vessels, immune support – a major antioxidant, absorption of iron.	Fruit & vegetables – esp. acerola cherry, peppers, guava, berries, green leafy vegetables.
D	Bone health, absorption of calcium & phosphorus.	Cod liver (only organic), oily fish, butter, eggs.
E	Immune support – high level antioxidant, promotes healthy cell growth/development.	Vegetable oils, oily fish, seeds & nuts, sun dried tomatoes, corn.

Mineral	Main Function	Best Food Sources
Calcium	Bone & teeth health, blood clotting, nerve & muscle health.	Seaweeds (esp. kelp), green leafy vegetables (esp. kale), turnip, sesame seeds (tahini), tofu, bony fish (sardines & anchovies), dried figs, almonds.
Iron	Formation of red blood cells, transportation of oxygen.	Kelp, molasses, wheat bran, liver (only organic), sesame, pumpkin seeds, fresh mint.
Magnesium	Energy production, muscle, heart & nerve health, cell formation – basically responsible for most major processes within the body.	Seaweeds (esp. kelp), wheat bran & germ, nuts (esp. almonds & cashews), seeds (esp. sesame & sunflower), green leafy vegetables, cereals, beans & pulses.
Potassium	Fluid balance, muscle & nerve function.	Vegetables & fruit, beans & pulses.
Selenium	Immune support – a potent antioxidant.	Wheat germ, brazil nuts, lentils, tuna, oats, sunflower seeds.



Sodium	Fluid balance, muscle & nerve function.	Seaweed, anchovies, olives. (There is no necessity to add sodium/salt to foods. It is readily available in all whole foods.)
Zinc	Immune support, wound healing, growth, healthy skin.	Oysters, wheat germ, liver (only organic), pumpkin seeds.

Essential Fats - Essential Facts

Over the years the media has placed much negative emphasis on the role of fats in the diet. Because of their high calorific value fats are generally considered as the 'bad guy'. In actual fact, fats perform many vital functions. The right type of fats will actually help you to lose and maintain healthy weight levels. Fat benefits include the maintenance of a healthy nervous system and the reduction of inflammatory conditions. They are also an essential requirement for good mental health. Most crucial is the type of fat which we consume. Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are what the body needs to maintain good levels of health. Once again, Quality is key.

The Good Guys

Beneficial sources of fat include the monounsaturates and polyunsaturates. These include the essential fatty acids: omega 3, 6, and 9. Omega 9 is obtained from a variety of seeds, nuts, whole grains, plant, and some animal foods. Deficiency in omega 9 is rare. Omega 6 is a vital fat source obtainable from the same food groups. Many people supplement this fat although if they are eating a well-rounded diet, it is unlikely that they would be deficient in omega 6. In fact, too much omega 6 can cause a fat imbalance in the body. The essential fat most lacking in the Western diet is omega 3. Undoubtedly the best source

of omega 3 fats can be found in cold-water, oily fish. These include anchovies, caviar, herring, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, trout and fresh tuna. Sadly sourcing quality fish these days has become a problem due to the high levels of contaminants found in our polluted seas. Omega 3 can also be found in reasonable quantities in flax seeds/linseeds and green, leafy vegetables.

The Bad Guys

Unfortunately the average Western diet tends to contain high levels of detrimental fats, particularly in relation to beneficial fats. It is no surprise to hear that the majority of them can be found in commercial, processed foods. Most plant-based fats are found in fluid form, such as vegetable oil. In order to turn them into solid substances like margarine, they are generally put through a hydrogenation process. What this means is that the chemical structure of the fat is turned from a cis fat into what is known as a trans fat. Trans fats can be found in all fast foods and many processed meals and baked foods. The human body is not designed to absorb and assimilate them. Hydrogenation also creates free radicals. These are harmful, toxic substances that damage the body. It is best to avoid any foods which contain hydrogenated or partially-hydrogenated fats/oils. At best they can interfere with the absorption of nutrients, at worst they can cause

damage to the body. It is also important to avoid exposure of fats/oils to high levels of heat. Heating fat (whether beneficially-sourced or otherwise) will result in damage and the creation of free radicals. Any foods that contain heated fats/oils will be a source of detrimental fats.

Unfortunately the average Western diet also tends to contain excessive levels of saturated fats. These fats are associated with high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, heart disease and cancer. They are most commonly found in animal foods. Saturated fats are acceptable in moderation. However the balance between essential fatty acids and saturated and trans fats is completely out of kilter in the average modern diet. The chart below will serve as a guide to help you get that balance right.

Your Essential Guide to Healthy Fats and Oils

Saturated Fats	Monounsaturated Fats (Omega 9)	Polyunsaturated Fats (in general)	Omega 3-rich Fats	Omega 6-rich Fats	Processed Fats
Reduce/ Avoid	Eat moderately	Eat moderately	Eat plenty	Eat moderately	Avoid
Meats Dairy Palm oil	Olive oil Avocado Nuts: Macadamia, Cashews, Almonds, Pecans, Hazelnuts (especially) Seeds: in general Coconut oil	Sunflower oil Corn oil Nuts & Seeds	Cold Water Fish Flax Seeds Green Leafy veg Walnuts Hemp seeds	Corn oil Evening Primrose oil Sesame seeds Sunflower oil Safflower oil Soybeans	Fried food Vegetable oil Margarine Low-fat spreads Pastries, pies & tarts Biscuits Cakes & baked goods Desserts & puddings Crackers Ice-cream

Whilst on the subject of fats I feel it important to mention the *low-fat* or *fat-free* ranges which have become popular in many supermarkets. Very often many of these foods (a lot of which are highly processed) will contain food enhancers to make up for the fat that has been removed. The same applies to many *low-sugar* or *sugar-free* foods on the market. Some of these foods will be naturally low in fat or sugar anyway. However many will contain a cocktail

of chemicals included to enhance the flavour and texture of the product. Whereas fat or sugar may be reduced, they will often be substituted for far more harmful substances which the body will have even greater difficulty in processing. So instead of providing a healthy alternative, these foods will often be causing more harm. In general, it is best to steer clear of 'diet' foods. (In any case, it is unlikely that these will be whole foods.) If in doubt, check the ingredients listing on the back of the product to see what exactly you are putting into your body.

Good Health for a Good Life

With the exception of poor lifestyle habits (and that is the subject of a whole other booklet!), it is hard to be unhealthy as long as you are eating a good selection of fresh, organic whole foods. It is however, impossible to have good health if you are not following a healthy diet. Foods are the key to building and maintaining a body that can function with optimum vitality. It doesn't matter how healthy you think your lifestyle may be, it is the fuel that you put into your body that will ultimately determine your level of health. The ancient healers knew that good nutrition was the key to avoiding ill health. In an age where chronic illness and disease is on the increase, there is surely no better time to begin incorporating good nutritional habits into your lifestyle. Prevention will always be the preferred option to cure. Many years ago Hippocrates, the original father of medicine, was to utter a sentence which carries equal weight today: *"Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food."*

I would like to share with you my top 10 simple tips that you can put into practice every day. You can use this as a checklist to remind yourself of what you need to do on a daily basis in order to keep yourself in tip-top health. Remember, any little change you make will have a huge overall impact on your health.

Sam's Top 10 Tips for Healthy Eating

- 1) During the course of the day drink 2 litres of clean water daily. (Avoid tap water.) Doing this ensures that you maintain a clean, functioning system whilst flushing out any accumulated junk!
- 2) Avoid/reduce tea/coffee/alcohol/fizzy drink consumption. These drinks dehydrate and introduce toxins into the body. Drink herbal tea, water and vegetable juices instead, all of which have the reverse effect!
- 3) Eat organic. Try and obtain as much of your food as possible from organic sources.
- 4) Eat whole grains only. These can include whole grains, wholegrain pastas and wholegrain breads. Avoid refined grain foods such as white rice and white bread.
- 5) Eat a 'Rainbow Diet'. Make sure you choose a selection of different, brightly-coloured vegetables to ensure maximum nutrient intake.
- 6) Eat as much fresh produce as possible. Opt for frozen only when you can't obtain fresh sources. Try to avoid canned foods.

- 7) Avoid processed, shop-bought ready-meals. Make your food from scratch. Ensure that as many of your meals as possible are home-made.
- 8) Try to eat 2 servings of well-sourced, cold water, oily fish a week. (If you are not vegetarian.)
- 9) Choose good quality fats and oils. Keep saturated fats to a minimum and avoid damaged fats as much as possible.
- 10) Every day, eat foods that you enjoy!

“The first wealth is health.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Recommended Links

Soil Association

www.soilassociation.org

Everything you need to know about organic foods including the history of the organisation, the best places to buy organics and the latest updates in the world of organic living.

UK Food Online

www.ukfoodonline.co.uk

UK Food Online is the largest independent online directory that is focused on produce and drink available to the general public from UK producers, both online and by mail order.

Weston A Price

www.westonaprice.org

Dedicated to the continuing research of the work of Weston A Price, a dentist who in the 1930s traveled the world in search of the 'perfect diet'. His discoveries highlighted the development of disease in cultures moving away from their natural, indigenous diets to refined foods.

Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation

www.price-pottenger.org

Organisation established to provide the public and the healing professions with historical and anthropological findings, and up-to-date, accurate scientific information on nutrition and health. The Foundation is known for its integrity and accuracy in making this information available to the public. The website heralds the legacy of both Weston A Price and Francis Pottenger, a dentist and a doctor whose lives work involved research into nutrition and health.

Seafood Choices Alliance

www.seafoodchoices.com

Useful information on the state of the earth's seas. Up-to-date information on the contamination levels to be found in

seafoods. An excellent website helping you select the healthiest and most ethical source of seafood.

Slow Food

www.slowfood.com

International organisation founded in 1986 whose aim is to protect the pleasures of the table from the homogenization of modern fast food and life. Slow Food promotes gastronomic culture, develops taste education, conserves agricultural biodiversity and protects traditional foods from extinction.

John Robbins

www.foodrevolution.org

Author of the bestselling Diet for a New America and The Food Revolution, John Robbins is the son of the founder of the Baskin-Robbins ice-cream empire (which he chose to turn his back on). His books look at all aspects of the modern diet and agricultural methods that have moved far away from our original, healthy methods of eating and farming.

Dr Joseph Mercola

www.mercola.com

Contains up-to-date research as compiled by Mercola, a doctor concerned with the treatment of patients via natural health means. There is a strong emphasis on healthy diet.