

York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

It is time for women to become empowered...It's your time to make yourselves your number one priority, to take the best care of your health. Your health doesn't have to just happen to you, there are many ways you can change your future health by making choices that reduce your health risk. Sorry guys...but the focus of the June issue of the York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views is [Women's Health](#).

All women know they should eat better and exercise more to improve health, lose weight and gain strength, but the scary diets that forbid occasional treats like red wine or dark chocolate, or insist that you follow strict food combinations are extremely daunting. Those of you who have talked to me about diet know that I am not a believer in any diet. My advice is, first to realize that you can achieve what you always thought was impossible, and second is to **COMMIT** to a **LIFESTYLE** that that is going to make you happy and healthy. There are many different women's diets, all myths, promising the "beautiful body" with little effort. These diets/myths need exposing. Diets never have and never will work.

Every woman should know what foods are good to eat, why they are good for your body, what vitamins and minerals a woman needs, how to prevent ill-health, and how to restore balance in your life.

Healthy eating is the most important ingredient in a healthy lifestyle. It is also very significant in changing the appearance of your body. You can lift hard and do cardio, but you will never see the results that you desire without cleaning up your eating habits. Eating a healthy diet doesn't have to be dreadful or boring either; educating yourself about the proper foods to eat leaves a long list of delicious choices.

Carbohydrates, proteins, and fats are essential to any good eating program. Try surviving without one of them and you are guaranteed to be a miserable person.

Protein is probably the most powerful and effective food for woman to eat. High protein foods feed muscles. If you do exercise along with eating a high protein diet, your body "thinks" that the muscles are important to sustain life and you burn only fat. Studies have shown that women need 1.2 grams of protein per pound of body weight or 2.5 grams per kilo.

For example a 130 pound woman can eat $130 \times 1.2 = 156$ grams of protein per day.

High Protein Foods

- Meat fillet (lean meat)-veal, chicken
- Fish-white fish, tuna
- Low fat milk
- Low fat feta cheese/cottage cheese
- Low fat tofu
- Egg whites

Add a salad and/or fresh vegetables such as, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, cabbage, spinach or broccoli to any meal. You can eat these as much as you would like throughout the day.

Making Wise Carb Choices

Many women crave carbohydrates. If you find that you crave carbs a lot, you should know that it is not because you lack discipline or do not have enough willpower, but rather it is your body telling you that something is missing. Most women will crave carbs from time to time for various reasons. A lack of nutrition causes a hormone imbalance, which can cause you to crave carbs. Studies have shown that when a wide variety of nutrients are consumed the cravings for carbs seem to vanish. Another cause of carb craving in women is low blood sugar. These cravings will hit you at the same time each day; usually in the late afternoon or evening. They may also occur when you are dieting or after a skipped meal. You can avoid these by not skipping meals, and by munching throughout the day on healthy snacks.

Serotonin is a hormone that makes you feel good and gives you energy. When serotonin levels are low, your body sends a signal to the brain letting it know that it is hungry. As soon as you eat your serotonin levels are restored along with your energy. Any type of stress, anger, depression, or just being bored may also be the result of low serotonin levels, and may cause you to crave carbs. Your body is feeling down and somehow believes that food will lift you up. This usually works and that is why you immediately resort to food at the first sign of stress. If you find yourself in these situations, try not to opt for junk food, but rather choose a healthy snack.

Menstrual cycles may also play a role. For some reason women need more calories in the days leading up to their menstrual cycle. Medical science has not figured out why this is, but it could very well be the body's way of building up the serotonin levels to help fight the negative mood swings that are associated with PMS.

So ladies, well it might sound like carbohydrates are the enemy, it is important to remember that there actually are two types of carbs, otherwise known as good carbs and bad carbs. While the bad ones can be safely cut out of your diet it is important to eat the good ones. Examples of good carbs are whole grain foods, legumes and vegetables. These are not readily absorbed into the body as they are broken down slowly. Examples of bad carbs are white bread, pasta, rice...anything made with white flour.

It is important to remember that cutting down on bad carbs does not mean you will never be able to enjoy that special treat. "Everything in moderation". Moderation may sound ordinary or boring, but it's a great way to lose weight, eat better, and still have some fun along the way.

Vitamins and Mineral Supplements are extremely important to a variety of health issues that affect women. Minerals are able to assist us in making sure we receive all the proper nutrition our bodies crave, maintaining normal and proper cell function, as well as the healthy formation of bones and tissues.

Calcium is by far the most profound mineral in the body; deficiency can lead to a variety of health conditions. In women it is believed to contribute to the irritability of muscles and nerves, cramps, osteoporosis, and insomnia just to name a few.

Magnesium helps with the absorption of calcium in our bodies. It also helps with production of energy, as well as protein synthesis and muscular contraction and mood regulation. A deficiency of magnesium can cause muscle cramping and chronic fatigue. In fact, some studies have shown that magnesium mineral supplements can help relieve many premenstrual symptoms. Older women may need more magnesium than others as they have naturally lower levels.

Potassium is believed to be integral in women's health. Potassium lowers blood pressure. It is also important for maintaining normal heart rhythms, nerve impulses, and muscular contractions. Finally

potassium can help regulate your body's water balance.

Zinc is an important mineral that is found in every cell in our body. It plays an integral role in immune system functioning. Zinc is also necessary to proper sexual function, the healing of wounds, and the sensory functions taste and smell.

Tips for transforming the female stubborn areas.

In women the stubborn areas tend to be the buns, thighs, abdominals and triceps areas. Typically, woman can achieve a lean upper body displaying definition in arms and shoulders before seeing the same result's in the lower body. However don't despair. Hopefully the tips below will arm you with the information necessary to incinerate those stubborn areas.

Weight training The biggest misconception that women have is that they will become big and bulky if they do any sort of weight exercises. **WRONG!** The complete opposite is true; in order to get rid of body fat and attain a sculpted body you need to challenge it through a constantly changing weight routine. If you are carrying a significant amount of bodyfat, you may actually slightly increase in size for a short period of time. This is common and that scares many females away from the weight room: knowing ahead of time that this could happen and pushing through this brief period of time will be the best thing that you do. Once the body realizes that you are going to continually challenge your body, it will adapt and become leaner and firmer.

Cardio is probably the most popular exercise for women. The benefits of a solid cardio workout are endless; you maintain excellent cardiovascular health, it helps you to manage a healthy weight, it reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes. etc. The most important thing to remember about cardio is to mix it up. Do aerobics one day, zumba another, go for a run the next day and get on your bike and go for a ride the day after that. Not only does the change of routine keep you interested and engaged, but your body also gets a better workout because it can't adjust to the same, habitual exercise.

Bottom Line Ladies TODAY can be the beginning of a better life of improved health and fitness for you. Set a goal to make your wellness a top priority. Remember, somebody loves you. Stay healthy and fit. I will be here to help and encourage you in reaching your fitness goals.