

THE THREE MOST POWERFUL WAYS TO EAT HEALTHIER NOW

There are **many important pieces** to each person's **puzzle** of creating and sustaining their **own best health**. My **mission** is to **help inspire and inform** more people who **want** to realize better health to **learn about, understand, and implement** as many healthy eating and healthy living pieces of their own puzzle as they can.

This **SPECIAL REPORT** is about the three most powerful ways you can eat healthier, starting today. In my book, **How Healthy Is Your Doctor?** (drkathryncollins.com/howhealthyisyourdoctor), I discuss at greater length the **science** behind my healthy food, and healthy living, recommendations; I offer practical **guidelines** for eating, living, and being healthier; and I endeavor, in simple language—using lots of stories and examples—to **demystify the health care system**, in order to **empower each of us**, if we so wish, to **create our own best health**.



1. EAT MORE PLANTS! The **evidence** is clear, after decades of nutrition research: The plant world—in all its natural, whole food bounty—provides us with the healthiest foods we can possibly eat. Eating a **“plant-based diet”**—more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes; less meat, dairy, and over-processed foods—holds the key to **preventing 80-90%** of our **most common chronic diseases**, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, mental health and behavioral problems, asthma and lung disease, even some cancers. **Powerful** stuff!

There are several important **reasons** that **plant foods** are **far superior** for our health than animal-based and processed foods. **Fruits and vegetables**, in particular, contain thousands of tiny **“micronutrients”** (vitamins, minerals, and other whole-food-based phytonutrients—plant nutrients) that are all critical to a well-functioning body, mind, and immune system.

Fresh, whole plant foods contain lots of **fiber** and **water**—also super health-supportive. **Plant proteins** that occur in **green leafy** vegetables and especially in **legumes** (see beans, below) have now been proven to be far better for health than animal proteins.

Eating a diet loaded with **animal foods** (meat, poultry, dairy) increases your “**inflammatory load**” (the amount of disease-producing inflammation in your body), depressing your immune system and making you **more susceptible** to acute and chronic **diseases**, including cancer—especially colon cancer—while also **promoting obesity and diabetes**.

Processed foods pose a **similar strain on health**, increasing inflammatory load and over-relying on **salt, sugar and fat**, without offering any real redeeming nutritional value (added vitamins in processed food are not the same as the vitamins and nutrients contained in whole, plant-based foods).

2. EAT MORE BEANS!



I chuckle a little every time I make this recommendation; it seems so unexpected for most people. I met an energetic proponent of beans as a near-perfect food at a medical conference at which we were both presenters (**my topic, “How Healthy is Your Doctor?”** was surprisingly **well received** by most of the **doctors** in the audience!).

The bean cheerleader was Dr. Joel Fuhrman, author of the **Eat to Live** books and cookbooks. During his presentation, he spent quite a long time raving about the incredible health benefits of beans. **Beans** (red, white, kidney, black, etc.) are part of the **legume family** (yes I know, they're plants too—but they're special!) which includes **soybeans, peanuts, peas, chickpeas, and lentils**.

The **reasons** we're both passionate about beans: they're **perfect proteins** (like meat, without the down sides), they have tons of **fiber**, they contain other healthy micronutrients, they're **easy and cheap** to acquire and prepare, and they are wonderfully **filling**.

This last point is especially important for people who think eating plant-based means only salads—and insatiable hunger. You can **eat as many beans as you want**, get full, meet your daily **protein** and “**good carbohydrate**” needs, and not have to worry about getting fat. What a deal! Your body will also adjust quickly to beans' gas-producing tendencies, once you start eating them more often.

Speaking of “**good carbs**,” I met a man recently while SCUBA diving, who related excitedly to me how much weight he'd lost on a “no carb” diet (see my diet section below for why diets are such a bad idea for most people; and why **weight loss**, while a good thing in general for people who are overweight, **can** come at the price of long-term health).

He was worried about the “carbs” contained in beans; but they're good carbs!—the kind that absorb into your bloodstream slowly, because of their healthy fiber and protein. In my opinion, “no carb” diets mean you're throwing out the baby with the bath water (fruits and veggies have lots of carbs, as do whole, healthy grains); and that you're probably consuming way too much fat and animal protein instead.

Potatoes, by the way, especially sweet potatoes, are **also healthy carbs** (when eaten boiled or baked, with skins on!), and are low calorie, high nutrition, filling foods, great for plant-based diets; just don't smother them with butter and sour cream!

Taste buds are **wonderful helpers** in anyone's journey to eat healthier. Within about 20-30 days after people start to embrace plant-based eating, they notice that things they used to “crave” or “need” to eat start appealing to them less and less. It's true! One of the best

potatoes I ever ate was on a beach in Maui, baked over a campfire, garnished solely with a little bit of salt. Absolutely yummy!

Soy (another super-healthy legume) has been given an **undeserved bad rap** in recent years because it contains “phytoestrogens,” (plant-based estrogens). Some men, or some women with breast cancer in themselves or their families, are afraid to go anywhere near it. Soy is also targeted by some wellness practitioners as a common source of food “allergies.”

But the **concentration of estrogen** in plant-based foods like those found in soy is **miniscule** compared to common pharmaceutical forms. And the real culprit in **most soy “allergies”** is most likely from soy protein’s ubiquitous presence in many if not most **processed foods**; when people **stop eating** so many of **those**, their allergies improve. This approach can also help people avoid other food allergies. And the latest research on **kids and peanut allergy** is great news: many kids can be started very early in childhood with tiny exposures to peanuts, to prevent later development of a full-blown peanut allergy.

This is important because peanuts—one more delightful **legume**—are also **super healthy!** My eighth-grade science teacher (in 1963!), assigned our class to debate whether the peanut or the soybean was the “**most perfect**” food for humans to consume; I forget which won.

3. **QUIT**



DIETING!

The word diet, unfortunately, is used both to describe the way one eats (e.g. a healthy diet) and the often miserable, usually time-limited programs that the billion dollar diet and diet book industries lure people into buying and trying. **DiETING** is one of the **last** ways to eat that you should ever adopt, if you wish to **become** healthier and enjoy a **healthier weight** for the rest of your lifetime.

Diets don't work! The statistics are grim about what percentage of dieters gain all their weight right back, or more; it's almost everyone! Diets may seem great for a few days or weeks; and they may temporarily "work," if **losing weight vs. gaining health** is your goal.

But one of my mentors is fond of asking, "You can lose a lot of weight fast if you use crack cocaine, but will you be healthy?" Her point is that **many diets** that lose weight the **quickest** are **horrible for your health** (except for medically supervised fasts, or when generally healthy people fast once in a while). Many diets are popular because they indulge people's cravings: reference the Atkins diet (butter and meat, anyone?) or even the Paleo Diet, which reinforces meat-eating behavior while followers often neglect the fruit and vegetable parts.

Meanwhile, **most "diets" do not prepare you for life after the diet.** Dieting is usually about **deprivation**, and most people figure out, at some point, that deprivation is not a comfortable, nor a sustainable, way to live long-term.

People have **many reasons for overeating** (especially behavioral or emotional ones), for **not exercising** (often from inexperience, or from eating so poorly—and not moving at all—that they always feel tired), or for **preferring junk food** over real food (cost, convenience, addiction to sugar, salt and fat, etc.).

Losing unnecessary and unhealthy weight is something that must be addressed on multiple fronts, not just the simple direction to "**eat this, not that**" (though that phrase is the title of a fairly good health—not diet—book).

Dieting also tells your body that you're not going to be feeding it anytime soon, so your body clicks automatically into "survival mode" and **conserves** as many **calories** as it can, **storing** it as **fat**...making it even harder to lose any weight, then or later.

So here's a cool secret: If you **trend** your diet over to **plant-based eating** you will, over time, **naturally shed unneeded pounds** without you really having to focus on it; and you'll **get healthier** at the same time.

A great resource is the book, **The China Study Solution**, written by the son of one of the true **pioneers in nutrition research**, **Dr. T. Colin Campbell** (whom I've had the great pleasure to meet and to learn from). The book is based on the elder Dr. Campbell's research conclusions (published in the landmark book, *The China Study*) about how much healthier plant-based eating is compared to diets that include a lot of animal products.

The **goal of best health** can be best realized by **lowering** our **consumption of animal-based, and processed, foods**. The Standard American Diet (S.A.D.!) is now about 50-60% processed, and 30% animal-based, foods. We have a long way to go...but **we can get there!**

ACTION STEPS:

1. MAKE FRIENDS WITH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES! Try this challenge: **Add at least one serving** (half a cup, or more) of a **fresh vegetable and/or fruit** to every meal...including snacks! One way to remember to do this is to use the mantra: **"Something fresh with every meal."** It's surprising how often we can forget to do this, if/when we're not paying attention. **Keep a food log for a week** to see how you do; and notice how it feels to be eating healthier foods.

2. MAKE A MEAL OUT OF BEANS/LEGUMES, EVERY DAY! The possibilities are endless; for example, a nice veggie chili can be made in a Crock Pot and eaten for lunch or dinner (freeze some to thaw and eat later). I eat a lot of tofu burgers: just slice firm tofu, roll in some

Brewer's yeast or nutritional yeast, and sautee in a non-stick or lightly oiled frying pan; add whole wheat bun and condiments and voila! A delicious meatless meal, based on the wonderful, and underrated, soybean.

3. IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY "ON A DIET," GET OFF! (or, as the protagonist in that crazy, amazing, 2017 horror movie screams, "Get Out!"). **Do not go on a diet, do not be on a diet, do not buy another diet book!** If you've already gotten yourself out of the diet and weight regain trap, great! You're ready to start eating better, not less. If this is **not** true for you, try **keeping a food journal** for five days, eat what you normally eat, and pay special attention to what you're doing, thinking, and feeling as you decide when, what, and where to eat. Are you savoring and chewing, or wolfing and gulping your food? This can be a powerful way to **start "seeing"** where your eating patterns and habits are coming from—the first step to **changing** them.

THE BOTTOM LINE (and this is really good news, because food is life sustaining and something to be enjoyed, and treasured, every day) is that **HEALTH IS A LIFETIME JOURNEY**. I hope you'll **choose to honor and to cultivate yours** by starting to **eat healthier now**.

So **where are you in your own health journey?** Do one or more of these three steps make particular sense to you? **Please join the discussion on my blog** (drkathryncollins.com/blog) and share your thoughts, experiences, and questions; or visit **my Facebook page** (www.facebook.com/drkathryncollins).

Thanks for your interest in learning more, and in creating, and enjoying, your own best health!

Kathryn Collins, M.D., F.A.C.E.P.