



Yeah, what you eat is that important

By Nikki Prosser

Ever wonder if the combo meal at your favorite fast food restaurant is good for you? How about that batch of chocolate chip cookies you just made? Or the bag of low-fat potato chips stashed in the pantry?

If you haven't, you should.

The reason?

What you eat can severely impact how you feel, look, live and age. And depending on how nutritious the foods are that you consume, you can increase or decrease your chances of getting diabetes, coronary artery disease, cancer and high cholesterol. But eating right takes planning and some know-how at the grocery store.

Following are some shopping tips that will help you stock your refrigerator and cupboards with nutritious foods that can get you eating the way God intended you to eat.

Skip the enriched white flour

When you shop, look for whole-wheat breads, pastas and beans. Because a large portion of your daily caloric intake will come from the grains you consume, you need to be sure to choose the right ones.

Read the labels

The first item listed on the label is the most abundant ingredient in the food. If the first item has the word *refined* anywhere in it, avoid it. Such food has been stripped and processed and has a lot of sugar and fructose corn syrup.

Visually inspect food

Visually inspecting the food you buy — especially bread — can help you determine if what you are buying is nutritious or not. When buying bread, look for loaves that are

dense, have pieces of grain in them and are known to you to be chewy. Whatever you do, skip the smooth, fluffy white breads.

Go for the fiber

Foods that contain fiber will aid your digestive system, which is a very good thing. High-fiber foods can also help you control your weight because fiber is known to absorb water in the stomach and delay the emptying of the stomach. This can make you feel full and satisfied for a longer period of time.

Avoid high fructose corn syrup

Since the early 1980s the average person's consumption of high fructose corn syrup has more than tripled, from about 19 pounds to 60 pounds per person annually. High fructose corn syrup is a highly purified blend of sugars derived from corn. Because the fructose in HFCS is part of a man-made blend (as opposed to the natural compounds of sugars found in fruit), the body metabolizes it very differently from other sugars.

Increased consumption of fructose has been found to double a person's ability to make fat. It has also been linked to higher levels of triglycer-

ides, a blood fat, that is an independent risk factor for heart disease.

Eat beans

They're low in fat and loaded with protein. So eat some beans — soybeans, chickpeas, pinto beans, kidney beans, and lima beans. Any way you like them, many beans are very good for you.

Don't shop on an empty stomach

Make sure you shop after a meal or a light snack. Doing so will help you resist the temptation to buy foods that are unhealthy.

Shop the perimeter of the store first

That's usually where all of the healthier choices are, and you'll avoid all the more processed, costly items in the middle.

Go big

Choose large bags of fruit (like apples or pears) instead of the single fruit items priced per pound. By doing so, you'll save money. **tpe**

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E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

Eat fruity

Be sure the foods you choose are rich in vitamins and minerals. You can easily find those treasures in many fruits and vegetables.

Did you know that fruits and vegetables can support your immune system and they contain phytochemicals, which help protect your body against cancer and chronic degenerative disease?

