

Splurge - Volume 8 Issue 4 (April 2013)

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SPRING – DIET & FITNESS

Another spring is upon us and it's almost time for baseball games, pool parties and vacations. After the winter months many of us have gained a few pounds, slipped into bad eating habits, and generally are not at our summer best. To combat this, lots of people start looking for fast solutions.

There are hundreds of books on the market, supplements that promise incredible weight-loss, and many appeal to our desire for quick results. But what is your best diet for reducing risk for heart attack, diabetes, cancer and stroke?

For most patients, I recommend the Mediterranean Diet. It's less of a diet than a style of eating based on much of the cuisine from that region. One of the main reasons I advocate this one over fasts or many stricter diets is that the Mediterranean Diet is one that is satisfying and it's simple. The results may be slower than crash dieting but research has proven it more effective for long-term health and people tend to stay on it.

When someone feels hungry or feels that what they're eating is unpleasing, they will almost inevitably cheat or quit. Sometimes diets completely backfire and a person actually gains weight instead of losing! For patients fighting high cholesterol, hypertension, obesity or wanting to increase fitness levels, a failed diet can leave them disheartened.

The Mediterranean Diet, however, is chock-full of great tasting, filling food that can actually boost your energy levels as you're losing weight, and keep you fit once you've reached your goal weight. The diet emphasizes lean meats, especially grilled or baked chicken or fish, whole grains and vegetables. Hummus, baba ganoush, salad with lots of greens, pita bread, vegetables, couscous- these are just a few examples. Cut out fried food, chips, pasta and potatoes. Try to incorporate more fresh vegetables, fruits and yogurt. Healthy snacks are encouraged in moderation.

In addition to changes in diet, I urge my patients to try drinking warm water with lemon or green tea, and rely less on high-calorie caffeinated beverages and sodas. Water is crucial in maintaining a healthy weight, so be sure to drink 6-8 glasses a day at least. As with any weight loss program, check in with your doctor to check your weight, cholesterol, blood pressure and any other mitigating health concerns before setting goals. Consult a nutritionist or check online for Mediterranean Diet guides and recipes.

I suggest setting reasonable goals and celebrating each "win". For example, if you want to lose thirty pounds, make sure to reward yourself for each incremental pound or inch lost. Thirty pounds doesn't seem so daunting if it's broken up into manageable five pound segments.

If you're adding in an exercise routine, celebrate each milestone and make it fun and enjoyable. Find a workout buddy, a diet partner or join weight watchers or a weight-loss group at the gym if you prefer a more supportive setting. Making weight loss a fun journey and exploration will do wonders for keeping you going on those mornings when staying in bed seems easier than heading for a run.

If it's been a while since your last checkup or if you have physical limitations or health concerns, I encourage you to see a doctor, and get started. Take care of your body and make sure you're having fun while getting in shape. There are so many activities, sports, and friends to meet that it's imperative to care for your body, prevent disease, and deeply live your life.

Most patients report that staying fit by eating right and exercising regularly increases their energy, libido, self-esteem and mood. What better gift to give yourself and your loved ones than radiant health, confidence and playfulness? As a doctor, I'll add that it's crucial to longevity and heart health to eat right and keep moving. Please always remember to take your health to heart in every way, every day.

Listen to Dr. Galichia's Radio Show – "Take Your Health to Heart" every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com. We would love to hear from you!!!

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