

Eat This! Don't Eat That!!!!!!

This catchy book title puts food choices in perspective. Every day choices can be tricky-especially in the rapidly changing food world. Food awareness has become necessary part of life in this century. Arming oneself with up-to-date information can mean the difference between a healthy weight and obesity. Unfortunately, the marketing ploys can hide loads of calories and sacrifice nutrition. It is not easy to be properly informed in a food world where the game is to get you to buy and eat more.

Restaurant menus and grocery store aisle are filled with deceptive words and packaging that can delude even the savviest consumer. Remember that the seller of food is motivated by profit-not your waistline or health. Unfortunately, the needed information often requires research. The good news is that information is "out there" but it requires time and effort to find reliable information about the nutritional content of foods.

Fortunately, many useful tools can be found on the Internet and in the bookstore. Listed below are only a few of the possibilities. A good place to start looking for free information regarding a healthy general diet is online at www.mypyramid.com. This interactive website offers a quick estimate of what and how much you need to eat by age and activity levels. It also has interactive menu planners and food trackers that can assist with healthy eating.

Another online resource is www.calorieking.com. This site offers a free nutrition and exercise manager to help with tracking food and activities. A pocket- sized book with complete nutritional information for 11, 000 foods is also available for \$8. This book is available at bookstores or can be ordered online from the website. Other sites also provide tools for tracking foods and exercise.

Weight Watchers offers a number of fee- based group support classes locally. Online memberships are also available for a fee. The website www.weightwatchers.com has a number of tools to assist with managing weight and healthy lifestyles. The long-tested organization offers two food plans for helping manage weight loss goals.

The library and bookstores have a number of good books to help increase food awareness. An eye opening new book is " Eat This- Not That " by David Zinczenko and Matt Goulding. This book offers thousands of simple food swaps and comparisons that can save you 10, 20, 30 pounds or more. It has lots of pictures of food choices and updated information about restaurant menus, as well as, packaged and processed foods.

"Don't Eat This Book" by Morgan Spurlock is an eye opening, hard hitting look at the way we eat in our fast food nation. He explores our "super-sized" diet from several perspectives. This is a look at how the American (and global) diet has evolved over recent history.

A good way to increase awareness of personal nutrition is to begin with a food journal. By tracking the kinds of foods consumed and the portion size, one can begin to develop a clearer picture of what is really being eaten. This is a helpful first step in beginning to shape eating and exercise patterns. Research indicates that people typically underestimate the amount of food eaten and overestimate the amount of exercise. A written journal or diary helps with this distortion. Armed with information, one can effectively learn to appropriately choose when to eat this- but not eat that!