The typical American diet contains many calories but few nutrients increasing the risk of autoimmune disease; a nutrient rich diet contributes to immune system health.

Pure Food, Water and Air

Centuries ago, the physician Hippocrates described the role of pure food, air and water for preserving health. Pure food, air, and water, Hippocrates wrote, provide all the nutrients essential for optimal health. Nutrients are the elements and compounds, such as oxygen, sulfur, vitamins and minerals, which the cells of the body use as sources of energy and for proper functioning and metabolism. Unfortunately, however, even though dietary choices are abundant, few people heed this wise advice. Consequently, dietary factors are considered one of the leading contributors of disease.

Diet and Autoimmune Disease

One’s diet can be an environmental trigger for autoimmune disease when it is laden with chemicals such as aspartame and refined sugar as well as lacking in nutrients. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a nutrient rich diet strengthens the immune system, reduces inflammation and oxidative stress and helps with the normal building and repair of tissues.

Sources of Nutrients and A Nutrient Poor Diet

Some nutrients, such as cholesterol, a complex compound needed for hormone production, are produced in the body, primarily in the liver, during metabolism. However, most nutrients are not produced in the body and must be obtained from food, water, and air. A nutrient rich diet involves choosing a variety of foods that are densely packed with nutrients in the form of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

Different foods contain different types of nutrients. For instance, fatty fish are rich sources of vitamin D and omega-3 oils. Processed foods and various medications, on the other hand, can contain chemicals and preservatives that deplete the body’s nutrient stores. For example, refined sugar depletes the body of magnesium, an element needed for proper functioning of muscle, including heart muscle, and estrogens deplete vitamin B vitamins, which are essential for the proper functioning of the nervous system. According to nutritionists, the typical American diet, which is rich in fast and processed foods, is a nutrient poor diet.
A Balanced Diet

No one food contains all of the nutrients needed by the body. For instance, oranges contain vitamin C but are lacking in B vitamins. A nutrient rich diet must be balanced, which can be accomplished by varying one’s diet, following established guidelines and not eating the same foods every day, which can contribute to food allergies. A balanced diet contains adequate fiber and contains vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds, low fat dairy, fish and seafood, poultry and lean meats, natural sweeteners, beans and legumes, water, green tea and chocolate (rich in bioflavinoid catechins) and water.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee indicated that most Americans consume too many foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients. As a result the Naturally Nutrient Rich Coalition was developed. The coalition’s recommendations include brightly colored fruits; vegetables, including potatoes and other vegetables that are deep green, red and orange; whole, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods; nonfat or low-fat milk and milk products; lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts.

Resources:

Dr. Joel Furhrman, Eat to Live Blog


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