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# Nutrition for Longevity

BY GINA COUSINEAU

**T**here is no stopping the aging process, but we can certainly impact the effect it has on our bodies with our food choices. As an integrative culinary nutritionist who specializes in weight loss, autoimmune dysfunction, diabetes, and gut distress, the majority of clients come to me for weight loss. Senior clients often reach out after leaving a doctor's appointment in which their medical practitioner scared them into taking action due to a health concern. And while I want you to heed their warnings, I do not want you to be scared into action that will prove to be futile like in the past, such as going on another diet to simply lose weight.

Just like our elders deserve our respect, each human's body deserves self-respect, and all too often we do not give it. I encourage you to begin moving toward a healthier lifestyle approach—not with a restrictive punitive diet, but instead simply by moving toward food in its most natural form. My



hope by the conclusion of this article is that you have some action items to consider as to what you should and could include in your day, rather than what you need to avoid, to help you lose weight and improve your health for good.

Whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables should fill your plate for three meals each day, along with a snack or two, depending on your activity level. Protein-rich foods are encouraged with each eating opportunity, which can include lean cuts of meat, fish, poultry; nonfat or low-fat dairy options including eggs, and plant-rich sources such as tofu and other soy-based foods.

And don't forget the need for healthy fats to help with all of the metabolic pathways and absorption of essential fat-soluble vitamins such as olive oil, avocado, and nuts/seeds.

The items you didn't see me list for your everyday food consumption were things I consider treats and splurges such as cakes, cookies, and ice cream. While I have no issue with a lovely dessert choice for special occasions, I do suggest clients who have health and weight concerns should limit those items. And I must confess, I do encourage clients to avoid at all costs, sodas (both diet and sugar-laden) and ultra-processed foods, that can live on the shelf or

in the freezer for years on end, offering little nutrition, simply feeding the mind and soul.

Along with these food recommendations, we must consider nutrients of concern are lacking in our diets as we age and how to best include them:

**Calcium and Vitamin D** // These two powerhouse nutrients are imperative for bone health. Food sources: nonfat/lowfat dairy products, fortified foods, dark green leafy vegetables, fatty fishes, canned fish with bones, and fortified foods.

**Vitamin B12** // After the age of 50, we might not be able to absorb enough of this vitamin. Food sources: fortified cereal, lean meat, some fish/seafood.

**Dietary Fiber** // Helps keep us regular, and may reduce risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Food sources: whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables

**Potassium** // Consuming this mineral, along with limiting sodium typically found in processed foods, may lower your risk of high blood pressure. Food sources: fruits, vegetables, beans, and nonfat/lowfat dairy products.

Gina Cousineau sees clients virtually out of her San Clemente office. Her extensive education with a BS in dietetics and MS in integrative and functional nutrition, chef training, and 30-plus years as a fitness professional, allow her to help clients find a practical nutrition approach to reach their goals. You can reach her at [MamaG@MamaGsLifestyle.com](mailto:MamaG@MamaGsLifestyle.com), 949.842.9975, and on Instagram / Facebook @mamagslifestyle.