

## **What are the Problems with the Western Diet?**

There is a lot of press these days about the negative effects of the typical Western Diet. The diet and low fat craze has been around for quite awhile yet many people still don't understand some of the main problems with the Western Diet. This article will help define some of the specific issues and clear up some others.

**First of all, it not all about the calories and fat.** I want to tell you that a certain amount of fat is good for you...it is actually very necessary for your health. Yet is also important to distinguish good fats and bad fats. Most fast food and processed food is filled with bad fats, as well as sugar and chemicals. Trans fat & Hydrogenated Oils are the unhealthiest fats, stay away from these. Many nutritionist compare hydrogenated oil, which margarine is made out of as well as most junk food products, to be more plastic than food. Unfortunately many mainstream vegetable oils, including canola oil, are also questionable as they have been heated during their processing causing them to change their chemical composition. If you are using oils to cook food, cold pressed, expeller pressed and organic oils are a much better choice. Olive Oil and Organic Coconut Oil are two examples of very good oils as they contain nutrients and good fats. Let's move on to the specifics

### **What does the Western Diet have in it that is so unhealthy ?**

**1. Sugar** – Americans consume on average over 170 lbs of sugar per person representing about 25% of our average caloric intake! And most of this is highly refined processed sugar. They say processed sugar is an empty calorie; it virtually has no nutritional value. Research now is showing it is more of a “negative” calorie as it has harmful effects on our bodies and causes a lot of damage. Research also shows sugar is causing a huge epidemic of health problems in our society including diabetes, cancer and heart problems.

**2. Processed Flour & Carbs** – In similar fashion processed and refined flour and carbohydrates have virtually no nutritional value and actually cause harmful issues to the body. Our body requires lots of energy to absorb and process these types of foods putting stress on our system. These foods also cause us to gain unhealthy weight. Stay away from any white or bleached flour products and stay away from processed carbs.

**3. Chemicals and Preservatives** – Foods that have a long shelf life are usually not good for you. Most mainstream Western food has a lot of preservatives, artificial flavors and chemicals. Most of these chemicals are not natural and were put in food to enhance shelf life and flavor. They were not put there for your health benefit. Unfortunately they also put stress on your body and organs...you are basically processing poison. It simply isn't worth it.

**4. Hydrogenated Oil/Trans fat & Unhealthy Fats** - As I mentioned earlier stay away from the bad fats, usually in junk food, fast food and any processed foods. Look at labels of food that you buy and do not buy any hydrogenated oil foods or foods with trans fat. These are harmful

**5. Salt** - Mainstream food is too salty for your health. And it's highly processed salt also. Natural Salt can be beneficial to you, but in small quantities. It's best to salt your own food to taste. Again avoid junk food & fast food and look at labels on foods to see how much sodium they have.

## **What can we do to change our diet?**

There are a few simple steps you can take to eat healthier. Again it isn't always about the calories; it's about what type of food you eat and what you don't eat. Here are a few simple guidelines to get you started -

**1. Eat lots of Fresh Vegetables & Fruit** – the more fresh veggies, in particular green veggies, the better. All natural fruits and vegetables are good for you. Eat them raw when you can and do not overcook as they lose their nutrients. Eat lots of fresh produce and avoid covering them with too much dressing, cheese and other condiments.

**2. Avoid all Fast Food** – do not eat food that you order from your car window. Most Fast food is unhealthy food, it's that simple.

**3. Avoid all Junk Food** - do not eat food that contains lots of sugar, hydrogenated oils, preservatives, artificial flavors and processed flour & carbs. Do not eat foods that have a long shelf life. Highly processed junk food is the main culprit of unhealthy Western eating.

**4. Read labels** – If foods contain ingredients you can't hardly pronounce or has more than 5 ingredients don't buy it. Look at the trans fat, sugar and sodium content. Look at the preservatives and artificial flavors. Try to find and buy products with only one ingredient, the food itself.

**5. Cut down on Sugar** - If sugar is in the top 3 ingredients of a product don't buy it. Unfortunately so many products, including natural foods, have sugar in them. Cutting down on your sugar is one of the most important things you can do for your health.

**6. Eat Healthy Proteins & Fats** – Lean and natural proteins are the best for you as they digest easier. Red meat can be beneficial, but it needs to be from grass-fed and preferably organic beef. Salmon & most fish are also very good for you. Nuts are good snacking proteins. And again use cold pressed and organic oils for cooking and flavoring...avoid all hydrogenated oils and processed proteins.

**7. Eat Natural & Organic products** – If you can eat all natural foods you are going to be healthy. If you can eat Organic that is even better. Buy and eat as many natural foods fresh and raw as you can!

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Brian M Heater