



The healthiest diet

A plant-based diet is the healthiest

Brendan Brazier

Let's hope we've seen the end of faddish and unhealthy symptom-treating diets. Many people are now embracing a more holistic, sustainable approach with long-term health in mind. A whole foods, plant-based diet has become commonly accepted as the one with staying power.

While there are regimens that produce superficial results more quickly, many lack the long-term health benefits of whole foods, plant-based diets.

Overtaxed medical systems

Health experts have linked symptom-treating diets to the decline of our health in North America over the last several decades. Obesity and heart disease are at an all-time high, while more children than ever before are on prescription medications for health and behavioural problems.

As a result, the medical system is overwhelmed. Our health issues have resulted in an increased demand on the health care system, rapidly depleting its resources. As a result, it now takes more taxpayer money for the conventional medical system to keep up with demand.

This has become a significant strain on our economy, and the inordinate amount of resources being poured into treating people's poor health has caught the eye of politicians.

Linking diet and health

"Why is our society increasingly dependent on our health care system?" That was the question asked by the US Congress last year.

In April 2006 I was invited to address Congress in Washington, DC,

with Dr. T. Colin Campbell, co-author of *The China Study* (BenBella Books, 2005), called "the "most comprehensive large study ever undertaken of the relationship between diet and the risk of developing disease," and Dr. Neal Barnard, founder and president of the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Whole foods have not been altered; no part of them has been removed during processing.

Plant-based foods are comprised solely of plants and do not contain any animal products including dairy (milk or milk products or derivatives), eggs, or honey.

Our message was basic: diet has an effect on health. It might seem odd that we first had to explain to Congress that diet and health are connected, but we discovered that it's a mistake to assume that people really understand this.

Based primarily on firsthand research conducted for and documented in *The China Study*, we presented evidence that a plant-based diet is the healthiest in the long-term and

therefore will reduce our dependence on the health care system, now and for future generations.

Healthier diets mean healthier people

We suggested starting small by making balanced plant-based meal options available in all public buildings that also offer standard, meat-based meals.

While not as glamorous as the fad diets that have come and gone, a properly balanced, whole foods, plant-based diet is a healthy one. Those who eat a healthier diet are better able to achieve and maintain an ideal body weight, have more energy, fewer cravings, greater mental clarity, less joint inflammation, stronger bones, and quicker recovery time from exercise. Quite simply, these people are able to get more out of life.

Look for my next article in *alive*, in which I will provide specific details on how each of us can include more plant-based options in our diets and reap the benefits of greater vitality. **a**

Brendan Brazier is a professional Ironman triathlete, 2006 Canadian 50 km Ultramarathon Champion, and author of a new book called *The THRIVE Diet* (Penguin, 2007).