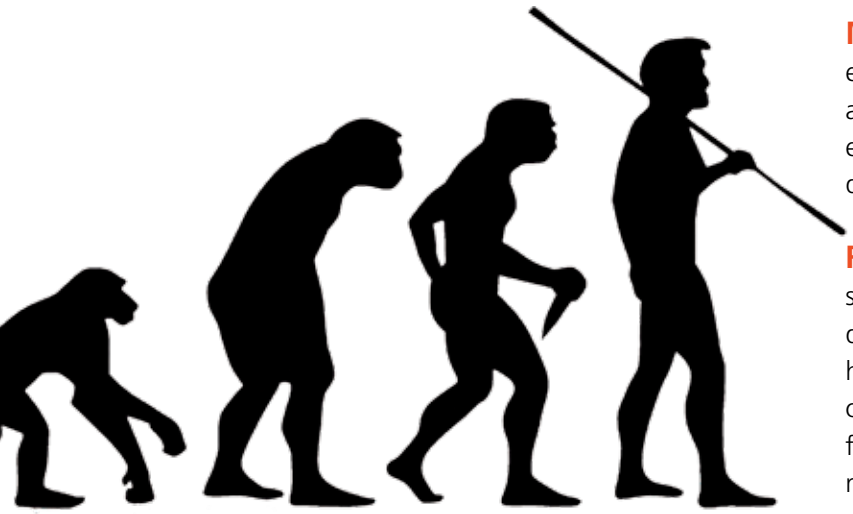
NUTRITION

A rEvolutionary Approach

Ask ten people what they believe is a nutritious diet, and you'll likely get ten different answers. They could vary from a vegetarian or vegan approach to a meat based "Atkins style" diet. Go to your local bookseller and the Diet and Nutrition section is bigger than some small town libraries. So is there an easier way to approach and successfully follow a nutritious meal plan? Fortunately the answer is "YES." Relatively new research has been conducted to scientifically determine what we as humans have evolved to need from the foods we eat, and how, if at all, we can get those nutrients in a modern Western World. The answer to the question of the ideal human diet will likely never be complete, but we can achieve a balance of nutrients that can promote health, prevent disease and facilitate physiological function by getting back to the basics.

All Homo sapiens are omnivorous animals that have evolved to eat a wide range of animals and plants. For the vast majority of our species' existence, we relied on our immediate environment for our food. We were "hunter gatherers" and did not develop the means to farm grains and dairy products until about 10,000 years ago (a millisecond in our 3 million year history and not long enough for our genetic code to adapt to the change). When this change in diet is brought through the industrial age, much of our standard diet is hardly recognizable. Many children-and some adults-no longer recognize what they are eating as modified seeds, or modified plant oils, modified starches and gums. Our guide to healthy eating is simply to see what was available to our ancestors to eat, and to try and mimic their nutrient dense whole food diet.

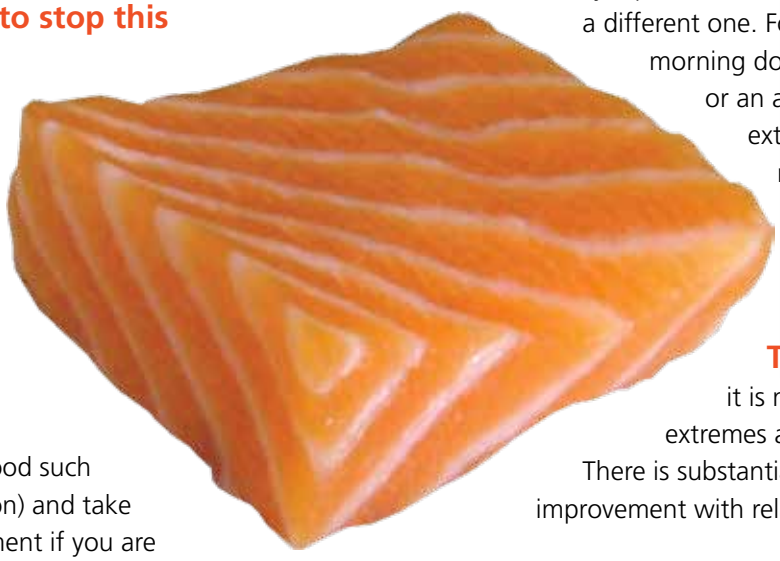


Most of the world's poor people are still rural, eat mainly seed derived protein -with useful additions from small amounts of fish, mollusk, meat, egg, vegetables and roots-and, except for illness derived from smoking, rarely show symptoms of degenerative disease. They eat closest to a 'human natural diet'.

Rich industrial/technical societies, chiefly Western societies eat furthest from a 'human natural' diet, and degenerative disease has reached epidemic levels. Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death in the USA. Strokes occur in about 500,000 people a year in the United States and for about 150,000 of those people the stroke is fatal. About 58 million people in the United States have hypertension-a major

risk factor for coronary heart disease. Nearly a million cancer cases are found in the people of the United States every year. Approximately 11 million Americans have diabetes, which causes kidney damage, limb damage, and other cardiovascular damage. 34 million adults-and increasing numbers of children-are obese, a risk factor in coronary heart disease. The American experience is the most extreme example of a population afflicted by degenerative disease. But the pattern is the same for all Western societies.

So how are we to stop this progression?



In my opinion, the bottom line is to eat whole natural foods to secure the essential fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6 (especially quality meats, nuts, whole seeds, green vegetables,and seafood such as wild caught salmon) and take an omega-3 supplement if you are not currently eating as naturally as you would like; don't be concerned about eating fatty animal tissue, but if you don't get much exercise, use fat trimming as an easy means of dropping daily calorie intake; and if you are going to use oils, use stable, predominantly monounsaturated oils such as olive oil, or canola oil. And make sure the oils are fresh, and unprocessed.

We need to be aware that the fat profile in grain fed animals is different from that of grass fed animals. The fat of grain fed animals has less omega 3 essential fatty acids, and more omega-6 essential fatty acids than grass fed animals. If you are reliant on grain fed animal fat to meet a good part of your calorie needs, it may be a good idea to correct the essential fatty acid balance by taking an Omega-3 supplement. Or regularly eat foods particularly high in Omega-3, such as sardines.

The three major difficulties in eating as we have evolved to eat are:

1. Changing our personal meal plan to include nutritionally dense whole foods.
2. Finding time to prepare them so they are available at home and at work.
3. Finding the determination to change and maintain a change.

Like everything in life, the decision to alter a lifestyle rarely happens easily. The most important factor for any change is to make small changes at first and incremental changes over time. Enthusiasm tends to have a short shelf life, and the best approach is to slowly replace a habitual food selection with a different one. For example replace a mid morning donut with a healthy smoothie or an apple and almond butter. The extra effort is to have prepared meals and snacks to take to work in the first place, rather than simply buying a donut or fast food lunch.

To achieve success, it is not necessary to go to extremes and eliminate all processed foods. There is substantial evidence pointing to personal health improvement with relatively minor change to diet and lifestyle.

The scientific debate on diet and disease is tiresome. In my opinion, as far as the diet component of health is concerned, you will not go far wrong if you overwhelmingly eat an omnivorous, fresh, varied, minimally processed, animal and plant based diet such as our ancestors would have found, protect yourself with an Omega 3 supplement and relax.

For help on your path to personal nutrition, please call the Health Professionals at the Rejuvanation Center for an appointment. **309.693.3150**

James Porter, COO
Rejuvanation, LLC