
RAWHIDE HEALTH – MEDICINE IN A BETTER WAY

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Nutrition 102 – Overindulgence

by Dr. Dale J. Ross, M.D.

Most people probably have an idea that they have over done it when they really over eat. However, I have also found that most people have normalized dysfunctional eating patterns. This means that the types of foods that are common and readily available and our portion sizes have undergone such a profound change over recent decades that we, as a society, have lost track of what is right or “normal.” Dinner plates are dramatically larger as a standard; 4 to 8 ounces as a common beverage serving size is almost unheard of anymore. Pre-prepared foods – canned, boxed, frozen, or deli made for home serving – are overloaded with extra sodium, fat, and sugar. Face it, enough sugar and fat can make even processed cardboard taste good.

Better eating does not mean you must buy the most expensive certified organic anything. I agree that our foods are not as pure or wholesome as they could be, but the reality is that you can make some changes, eat better, and build your body up rather than continue beating it up even without going to that extreme. If you like and can afford those specially certified foods is fine, but we can do a lot just by being a bit better informed and trying to live that out.

Basics on portion size cover things like a serving size of meat is the size of a deck of cards. Think of how big a deck of cards is. When I eat a steak, I know it is not a tiny little cut; I like a STEAK! Now, knowing that and making sure I burn the calories up and do not over do it too often is balance. Another approach if steak is your regular source of protein would be to make more frequent servings smaller and gaining balance that way. A serving size of cheese is two dominos. I have had patients that will eat a pound or more in a day and do not see anything wrong with that – you must find what is dysfunctional and start trying to make it better. A serving of cereal is generally a cup or less. I frequently encourage patients to try using a measuring cup, as a learning opportunity, for what the box states is a serving size for their preferred hot or cold cereals. Most bowls now days will hold 2-5 servings. A serving of vegetables varies depending on the vegetable, with a common approach I see being how little someone can get away with being usual. Vegetables have many trace minerals, antioxidants, flavanoids, and are a needed fiber source, but few people eat their steamed broccoli at breakfast, or even lunch. Veggies go with dinner most commonly in America and are skipped most other times. I know salads are a more common lunch time choice, but most people would do well to take an accounting of just what calories add up to with their usual topping choices. A salad can be helped with some chicken, turkey, or fish on top and more greenery with less of all that other stuff underneath.

Overindulgence is a norm. “Way too much” is what we think is “not too bad.” When you start making changes, you will find three thousand four hundred and seventy-six reasons as to why it won’t work or isn’t worth it. I would encourage everyone to look at what they could do better, then see if they really just might be able to start.

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Here are a couple of places to look – followed by a couple of the usual reasons I am told it will never work:

- A little less salt on the morning eggs or a bit less butter on the toast – “They have no taste.” The fact is we have trained ourselves for over indulgence in this area.
- Skim milk vs. 2% – “I grew up drinking it straight from the cow; that stuff tastes like water.” I grew up this way too. Your taste buds can wake up given the chance and the skim will taste great too.
- A smaller portion and fewer seconds – “I’ve always eaten like this and *nobody* is going to change me!” or “No matter what I eat I can’t lose any weight; *my body . . .*” or “I’ve been this size since high school so there’s nothing I can do about it.” or even “I only had one (salad, taco, serving, etc).” The truth is that calories in and calories out are a matched set. There is no human being who can create energy out of nothing. You cannot gain weight if you eat less calories than you burn up. If you have invented such a way, the federal government as well as OPEC is going to be beating down your door.

The body does go through changes to attempt to preserve what it has so greedily gathered in when we try and restrict intake. It is a rather selfish organism that will “fight” this loss of its precious reserves and its learned equilibrium. You can actually learn to recognize the signals resonating through your body and respond to them in a different way based on that understanding. As human beings we are given the capacity for great understanding, but we have given ourselves over to the callings from the body as the defacto decision makers. This is causing great harm since the body needs a thinking, responsible, concerned guide – our God given conscience and soul, to live the life we were created for. Start with a little knowledge, add in a little effort, then pay attention to what your body is saying. If the first thing you hear is the scream and grind for more to eat coming from inside, realize this is just the way a shrinking fat cell signals you to try and stuff more down your gullet.

A future nutrition article will begin to address several examples of food choices as helpful versus more problematic.