

[IMAGE]

Eating Clean: What It Means

By Julie T. Chen, MD

"Eating Clean"...what does that mean? I am guilty of also using those words frequently in my articles and when I address my patients in my integrative medicine clinic in San Jose CA. But what does it mean exactly?

When I mention eating clean, what I mean by that is that I want patients to eat real food. You might be thinking that all foods are real food but I would not agree. In my opinion, most foods that are coming out of packages or boxes or bags could potentially not be the ideal "real food" but of course there are exceptions.

In general, to avoid confusion, I recommend that my patients eat foods found in the outside aisles of the grocery store that mostly contain real meats, fishes, vegetables, fruits and grains. These are the categories of foods that not only help you feel better but I have had tremendous success in helping patients with various disease states such as rheumatological diseases, pain, fatigue, thyroid issues, and sleep issues, just to name a few.

When you eat foods that are in their natural forms, there is a higher likelihood for it to have more nutrients and less processed ingredients. For example, if patients like to use almond flour, I would rather they grind it themselves from whole almonds into powder than buy it pre-made. Or if a patient wants soup, it is generally "cleaner" if patient makes it themselves rather than getting it from a can.

eating clean - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Having said that, I recognize that not everybody can make their own food all the time so when you find yourself in a pinch and can't make your meals, it's ideal to pick up food that isn't processed into noodles, breads, crackers, wraps etc. It's better to pick up food that comes in its own natural form like fish with vegetables and quinoa or chicken with vegetables and brown rice. These options are healthier and more nutritious than potentially a noodle bowl or sandwich with processed meats and dressings.

Some of my patients wonder whether a little processed food is alright. The answer depends on whether someone has no health issues or they are battling health issues already.

If you have heart disease, diabetes, rheumatological diseases, cancers, thyroid disease or chronic pain, just to name a few examples, my recommendation is to avoid processed foods at all times. By doing so, you will not be giving these diseases fuel to foster.

Also, keep in mind that we are all human, if you say to yourself that you can cheat once or twice per week, frequently people will do it three to four times per week. If you tell yourself you can't cheat on processed foods, then in general, seeing as we are after all human, you might have processed foods a few times in a month at special occasions or when you have no other food options at a party or event.

When you eat "clean," you are taking in food in the form that Mother Nature intended and traditionally, that generates anti-inflammatory effects and has beneficial impact on your overall health and your weight, skin and hair. So, when you are eating food in its natural form, you'll be boosting your health as well as the natural glow of your skin and hair.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

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