

Local dietitian offers helpful hints for better nutrition

**“Moving Grays Harbor”
By Maryann Welch**

As diet fads come and go through the decades, the American Dietetic Association has dedicated the Month of March to remind each of us that the most effective long-term way to achieve a healthful lifestyle is to be 100% fad free. Chona Lorico, our Registered Dietitian here at the Public Health and Social Services Department, agrees. “You can lose weight on pretty much any diet plan that restricts the amount of calories you consume” she states, “the key to long-term success is to focus on your overall health. Many fad diets boast quick results but are not healthy or are very difficult to maintain over a period of time.”

Chona also offers the following suggestions to help all of us focus on what is most important in achieving and maintaining good health:

1. Develop an eating plan for lifelong health. Instead of relying on the latest fad to help you lose weight, get back to the basics. We all know that a diet that includes ample fruits and vegetables is better than a diet that derives the bulk of its calories from refined sugars and fats. I can attest to the power of that advice. My parents are well into their 80’s and are in great health – thanks in part to their love of fruits and vegetables. I can remember growing up and having lots of fresh vegetables and fruit on hand. I know that being exposed to fruits and

vegetables at an early age has inspired my eating habits as an adult as well. A big thanks to my mom and dad!

2. Choose foods sensibly by looking at the big picture. A single indulgence or unhealthy meal won’t break a healthful diet. When consumed in moderation and in proper portions, all foods can fit into a healthy diet. This means that I don’t have to feel guilty when I want to have that double scoop ice cream cone...I just know that it is an indulgence that I can’t have every day.

3. Find your balance between food and physical activity. As expressed in this column many times, physical activity is a very important part of overall health. It not only helps you control your weight, but promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces your risk of chronic diseases. This realization was key for me in my own life. I know that if I didn’t exercise I would have a very difficult time controlling my weight. I love to eat and that love drives my passion for activity...calories in, calories out!

4. Remember that food and nutrition misinformation can have a harmful effect on your health and quality of life. Many fad diets are not scientifically or even medically sound and may cause more problems than they solve. Learn how to spot fad diets for yourself. Any claim that eating (or not eating) specific foods, nutritional supplements or combination of foods that may cure disease or offer quick weight loss are key marketing tactics of fad diets. I’m sure that many of you, like Kim Carson in my last column, have tried every diet under the sun only to be disappointed in the long-term results. Know that to be successful in achieving a healthy lifestyle you have to be patient, make a plan and take baby steps toward achieving that plan.

Another great resource that Chona pointed me towards was the USDA MyPyramid.gov website. And quoting from that website “MyPyramid is about the ability of Americans to personalize their approach when choosing a healthier lifestyle that balances nutrition and exercise. Many Americans can improve their overall health by making modest improvements to their diets and by incorporating regular physical activity into their daily lives.”

A few key components that are stressed in this site are *personalization, gradual improvement, physical activity, variety, moderation and proportionality* - all concepts that we have touched on previously. I'd like to encourage you to check out this site (MyPyramid.gov) and see what it has to offer.

One last thing that Chona was excited to share with me was that many people were feeling overwhelmed with the recommendation of getting their “5-a-day” of fruits and vegetables. Recent changes to that marketing campaign base your recommended fruit and vegetable consumption on many factors. These include your age, gender and your activity level. Generally, the more active you are, the more fruits and vegetables you will need to consume to maintain a healthy body. Personalized information for this can be found at www.5aday.gov.

“Fruits and vegetables are still the best source of many essential vitamins and minerals that are necessary for maintaining a healthy body,” Chona states. “My advice is to eat a variety of foods every day and try to make the healthiest choices you can.”

As I have stressed many times in this column, no matter how you try to achieve a healthy weight or lifestyle, it all boils down to one thing...good

nutrition and physical activity are key factors in achieving your goals.

Maryann Welch is the director of Grays Harbor County's Public Health and Social Services Department.

If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the public health and social services department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us or visit our web site at www.ghphss.org.