

Dietary Guidelines

Endometriosis and Chronic Pain

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Introduction

Dr. Camran Nezhat's brothers joke that he has a hollow leg; he can eat whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and never gain a pound. His brothers, on the other hand, just look at food and gain weight.

Everybody has a different relationship with food. There is no diet scientifically proven to work for 100% of people. In general, having a healthy, balanced diet along with plenty of liquids and regular physical activity, is a good baseline to live a healthy lifestyle for everyone.

Keeping in touch with your body and understanding what reacts well and what doesn't is important in the process of establishing a diet best suited for you. If you notice that your body is reacting poorly to something (i.e. dairy, gluten, added sugars, etc.) take note and try to eliminate it. Your body will also tell you when it is hungry. If it is hungry, eat. If it is not, don't eat. It's as simple as that. Many people will eat out of boredom, continue to eat after their body tells them it's full, or binge eat. This is not healthy.

In addition to listening to your body and intuitively eating, it is important to have a wide variety of foods. Your body is smart. If you eat the same things every single day, your body will become used to it. For example, if you eat prunes every day to help alleviate constipation, you might slowly have to eat more prunes to achieve the same effect or the prunes might stop working altogether. Frequently eat a variety of foods to keep your body guessing. Your body will eliminate easier with foods it is not familiar to.

Eating a balanced diet alone may not be enough to live a healthy lifestyle. Exercise is also important. 30-60 minutes daily is the recommended amount. This can be done all at once, or in shorter 10 minute bursts throughout the day. If you live in a city, walking fast to and from work could count for daily exercise. Exercise will not only improve your health, but also boost your energy and improve your mood.

Use this guide as a reference to help tailor a diet that works best your lifestyle.

Overview

****In general, it is a good principle for everyone to eat a healthy, balanced diet and exercise regularly. Not all “good” foods are tolerable by everyone, so personalize your diet to what works best for you****

Recommended

- Green, leafy vegetables
- Fruits
- White meat (fish, chicken)
- Whole grains
- Vegetable-based oils (if using oil)
- Daily multivitamin

Avoid

- Gluten
- Alcoholic beverages
- Coffee
- Fried foods
- Animal-based oils
- Dairy
- Sugary sweets

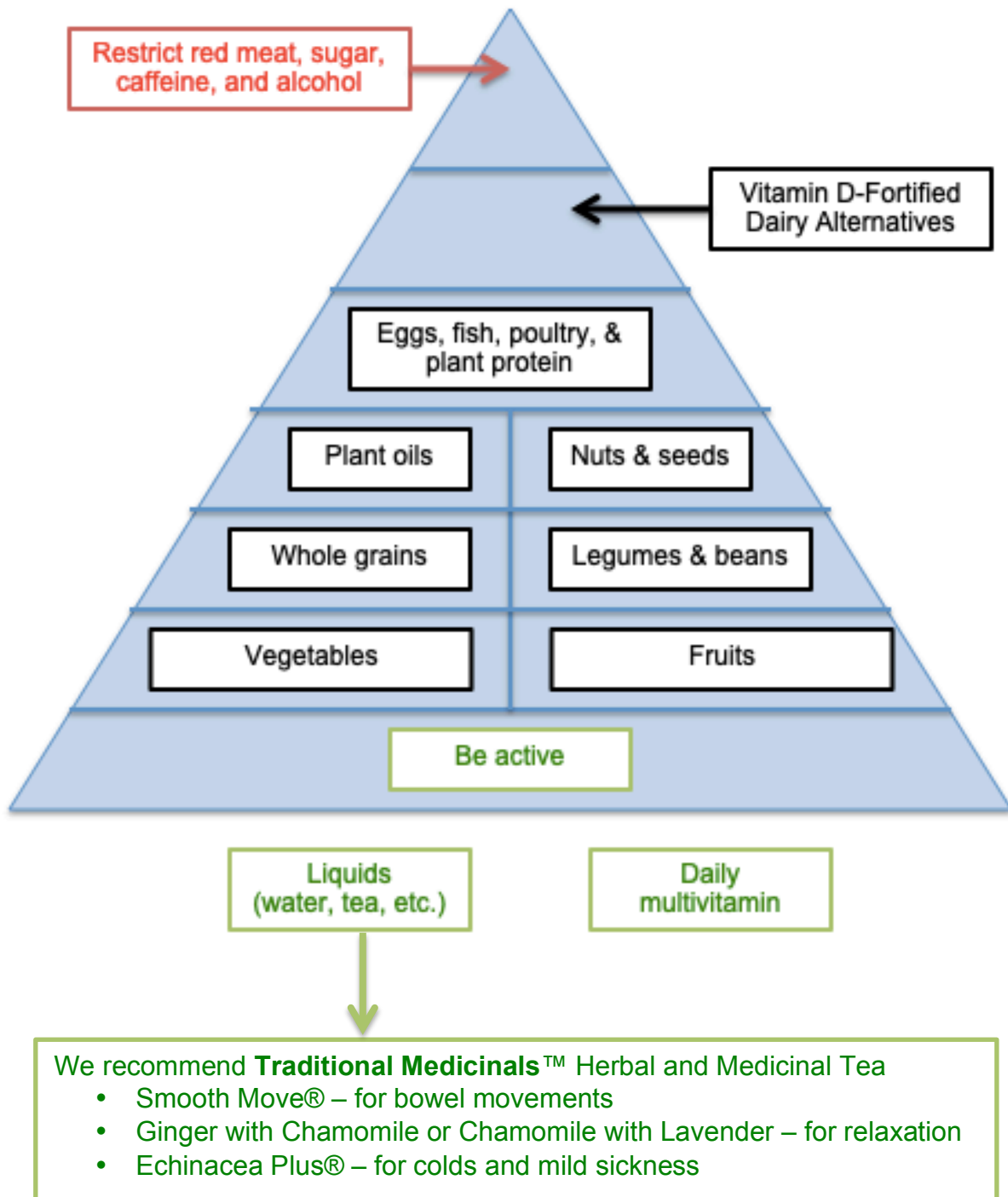
Exercise

- It is a good idea for everyone to exercise
- On average, try to exercise 30-60 min/day
 - Try short 10 minute bursts, such as walking (3-6 times a day)

Other Recommendations

- Try to eat organic as much as possible
- If you are craving sweets, try to substitute them with vegetables or nuts
- For any extreme diet (vegan, ketogenic, paleo, etc.), watch for pros and cons, especially hormonal imbalance causing disturbances in your period.
 - Take supplements for any deficiencies your diet may be causing
- If you are on a vegan diet, be sure to supplement with nutrients such as iron, folic acid, and vitamin B12.

Recommended Diet



Breakdown of Recommendations

Organic Foods

- **How much?** Ideally all of your food should be organic.
- **Why?** Pesticides such as organochlorines, organophosphates, bipyridines, etc. have been associated with decreased antioxidant capacity in fruits and vegetables. Organochlorines have also been found to negatively impact hormonal pathways.

Vegetables

- **How much?** 4-5 servings per day, minimum
- **Healthy Sources:** Raw salads, leafy greens (kale, chard, spinach, collard greens), cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, bok choy, cabbage), mushrooms, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, beets, lettuce, squash
- **Why?** Vegetables are rich in flavonoids and carotenoids with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Aim for a wide variety of colors to get a variety of vitamins. When possible, choose organic.

Fruits

- **How much?** 2 cups per day
- **Healthy Sources:** Berries, oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, apricot, peaches, pears, grapes, cantaloupe, bananas, pineapple, apples, watermelon, cherries
- **Why?** Fruits are rich in flavonoids and carotenoids with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Aim for a wide variety of colors to get a variety of vitamins. When possible, choose organic.

Whole Grains

- **How much?** 3-5 servings per day
- **Healthy Sources:** Brown rice, basmati rice, quinoa, steel-cut oats, whole wheat bread, gluten-free noodles or pasta
- **Why?** Whole grains have added B-vitamins with added fiber to promote healthy digestion and reduce spikes in blood sugar that may cause inflammation.

Beans & Legumes

- **How much?** 2-4 servings per week
- **Healthy Sources:** Black beans, chickpeas, lentils
- **Why?** Beans are rich in folic acid, magnesium, potassium, and soluble fiber. They are low-glycemic and help stabilize blood sugar.

Nuts & Seeds

- **How much?** 1-2 servings per day
- **Healthy Sources:** Almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, hemp seeds, avocado, natural peanut butter, chia seeds
- **Why?** Nuts and seeds are high in Omega-3s, which are anti-inflammatory. They are good sources of B-vitamins and phosphorus.

Plant Oils

- **How much?** 2-3 servings per day
- **Healthy Sources:** Extra virgin olive oil, flaxseed oil, avocado oil, nut-based oil
- **Why?** Oils are high in Omega-3s and antioxidants, which are anti-inflammatory. They are rich in monosaturated fats that raise good cholesterol (HDLs) and lower bad cholesterol (LDLs).

Fish & Seafood

- **How much?** 3-5 servings per week
- **Healthy Sources:** Wild salmon, cod, tuna, herring, trout
- **Why?** Fish and seafood have Omega-3s, which are anti-inflammatory and can fight depression and anxiety. Chia seeds and flaxseeds are good vegetarian/vegan alternatives for Omega-3s.

Poultry, Eggs & Plant Protein

- **How much?** 3-5 servings per week
- **Healthy Sources:** Skinless chicken, turkey breast, grass-fed lean meats, free-range eggs. Plant-based protein: avocados, lentils, beans, nuts, quinoa, seeds (hemp, pumpkin, flax, chia), peas, broccoli, and greens (spinach, kale)
- **Why?** Lean meats as a protein source are lower in saturated fat to better control cholesterol levels. Plant-based proteins are also a healthy alternative for those following a vegetarian/vegan diet.

Vitamin D-Fortified Non-Soy Dairy Alternatives

- **How much?** 3 servings per day
- **Healthy Sources:** Non-soy dairy alternatives that are vitamin D-fortified can include almond, coconut, cashew, oat, or hemp based products. Most orange juices in the U.S. are also vitamin D-fortified.
- **Why?** Vitamin D reduces pro-inflammatory cytokines that contribute to inflammation. If using dairy, choose lactose-free and organic products to reduce any added hormones.

Water

- **How much?** 8-8oz. glasses per day
- **Sources:** Pure water, Traditional Medicinals™ herbal tea, sparkling water
- **Why?** Water is vital for the body to properly function and removes metabolic waste products.

Daily Multivitamin

- **How much?** 1 serving per day
- **Why** As much as we try, it is extremely difficult to get all the recommended vitamins and minerals. A daily vitamin will supplement any shortcomings in a diet.

Exercise

- **How much?** 30-60 minutes per day
- **Sources:** Walking, swimming, cycling, yoga, running, pilates
- **Why?** Exercise helps maintain a healthy weight, lower the risk of certain diseases, improve sleep, relive stress, improve mental health, and increase energy. It also reduces ovarian stimulation and estrogen production.

Foods to Avoid

Note: It is normal to have cravings. If you generally have a healthy diet and lifestyle, it is okay to give into your cravings every once in a while.

Alcohol, Caffeine, Processed Foods & Sweets

- **Why?** These foods have little to no nutritional value and can prevent vital nutrients from being absorbed. Studies show caffeine and alcohol impair ovarian function, aggravate PMS symptoms, and negatively affect fertility. Sweets are pro-inflammatory and should be limited.
- **Alternative:** Dark chocolate, dried fruit, frozen yogurt, fruit sorbet

Red Meat

- **Why?** Red meats are pro-inflammatory and cause hormone imbalances
- **Alternative:** White meat, fish, or vegetarian/vegan meat alternatives

Fried Foods

- **Why?** High in calories, trans fat, and increase your risk of disease.
- **Alternative:** Steaming, oven-frying or air-frying

Eliminating Foods From Your Diet

Note: Some people can tolerate dairy, gluten, and sugars completely fine, but others cannot. If you notice your body does not react well to any of these foods, try eliminating them from your diet and see if your symptoms subside.

Food with Dairy	Dairy-free Alternative
Cow's milk	Almond, coconut, soy, oat, hemp, lactose-free milks
Yogurt	Almond, coconut, soy, lactose-free yogurt
Cheese	Dairy-free cheese, nutritional yeast
Butter	Olive oil, vegetable oil, dairy-free margarine
Ice cream	Dairy-free ice cream
For more information, visit godairyfree.org	

Food with Gluten	Gluten-free Alternative
Pasta	Gluten-free pasta
Noodles	Rice, cassava, quinoa, arrowroot
Bread	Gluten-free bread, bagels, muffins, rolls
Baked goods	Gluten-free pastries
Oatmeal	Gluten-free oats
For more information, visit glutenfreeliving.com	

Food with Added Sugar	Sugary Food Alternative
Soft drinks, energy drinks	Unsweetened tea, Crystal Light, water
Juice, fruit punch	100% freshly squeezed juice
Candy, cakes, cookies, etc.	Sugar-free cookies, candy
Pastries, donuts	Sugar-free rolls
Ice cream	Frozen yogurt, plain Greek yogurt