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The Basics

This purpose of this handout is to give you an overview of diet and lifestyle changes that are beneficial for everyone and that you can begin immediately. These guidelines, by themselves, can have a tremendous positive impact on your health and wellbeing as well as taking the first steps towards preventing and/or healing chronic diseases.

- **Diet, Food and Cooking** – Diet can be one of the most influential factors on our health, but diet can also be one of the most difficult changes to make in our lives. No one is perfect, aim for 80-20 – meaning 80% of the time you make healthy choices.
 - **Chew your food** really well. 32 times per mouthful. It's the first step of digestion and makes the rest of digestion easier for your body.
 - Half of your plate should be **vegetables**, preferably fresh, for every meal. Be sure to include one leafy, green vegetable daily including kale, swiss chard, collard greens, beet greens or dandelion greens.
 - Purchase **100% Organic** food whenever possible, but this is especially important for meats and dairy. See handout on the dirty dozen and clean fifteen for additional information.
 - **Omega 3's** – If you eat fish, be sure to include cold water fish, such as salmon, herring and tuna into your diet. These fish are high in omega 3 fats which can decrease inflammation in your body. Aim for 3 servings per week. Vegetarian alternatives include ground flax seeds and ground chia seeds. Aim for 2 tablespoons per day. Be sure to use ground seeds as whole seeds are not easily digested. If you are unable to include these foods into your diet, fish oil or flax oil can be used as a supplement.
 - **Avoid plastics**, especially for storage of fats and oils (and DO NOT heat food in plastic containers). Many plastic chemicals are known to interfere with our body's hormones. Preferred alternatives include glass and stainless steel.
 - **Avoid or limit refined sugar** whether it be cane juice, high fructose corn syrup or agave. It's not good for you. Occasional and small treats are ok. Healthier alternatives to refined sugars include whole fruits, brown rice syrup and small amounts of minimally processed honey.
 - **Avoid additives and chemicals** including artificial sweeteners, preservatives, colorings and flavor enhancers such as MSG. If you can't read or understand the ingredients, it's probably best to avoid it. Also, canned goods can contain BPA. Avoid these when possible or look for BPA free products.
 - **Preferred cooking materials** include **stainless steel, cast iron, glass, ceramic and soapstone**. Avoid Teflon and other synthetic non-stick surfaces as these chemicals can leach out into your food over time.
- **Water**
 - Water is so important that it gets its own category. A good rule of thumb is to drink **half your body weight in pounds as ounces of water**. For example, if you weigh 150 lbs, you should be drinking around 75 oz of water a day.

- We'll usually let you **count most herbal teas as water** too, but not coffee, black/green tea, soda or alcoholic beverages. If you drink any of the latter, you'll need to drink even more water.
 - A good solution is to **carry a glass or stainless steel bottle** around with you so that you always have access to water.
 - Not only is water necessary for all of our biological and cellular functions, but it's extremely important for **detoxification**. In our current society where novel and often dangerous chemicals are abundantly used, water becomes even more important.
- **Daily Movement**
 - What you can do may vary depending on your age and health, but almost everyone can move their body to some degree. Be sure that you do every day – even if this simply means a **15-20 minute walk**. Our bodies are designed to be moved and used. You can see major improvements in your health if you can remember to practice this daily.
- **Sleep**
 - Be sure to get at least **7 hours** of sleep per night, but you may need up to 9 hours. Also, aim to get to sleep by **11 pm**.
 - Sleep is extremely important for your mental and physical health. There are many chronic diseases associated with poor sleep patterns. Make this a priority and you'll begin to feel the positive effects.
 - If sleep is a problem for you, talk to us. Also, see our handout on sleep hygiene.
- **Play**
 - We often forget about play as we grow up, coming to think that maturity and professionalism equals seriousness. Not true. It's important to make play a part of your daily life. Laughter and play can be one of our most powerful tools against daily stress. Have fun and do it often!
- **Meditative Practice**
 - A meditative practice doesn't have to be a strict spiritual meditation routine. It may be part of a yoga or tai chi practice, but it may also be your daily guitar or piano playing session, singing, painting or knitting. The point is to find something enjoyable that quiets your mind and relieves stress. It can be a hobby, it can be a spiritual practice or it can simply be deep breathing exercises. Whatever it is, find something that works for you.
- **Earthing**
 - Earthing means physically reconnecting with the earth, literally. In its most basic form, this entails simply **walking barefoot in a grassy park** or on dirt – some way for your skin to actually touch the earth. For maximum benefit, practice this in a forest or similar natural setting. This is our natural state of being. If this isn't possible for you on a daily basis, then consider purchasing an **earthing mat** or similar device. Earthing allows your body's electrical potential to equalize with that of the Earth's. For all its simplicity, the health benefits are amazing! Earthing can decrease stress and anxiety, decrease inflammation and pain and lower your risk for heart disease.

For additional handouts and information on health & wellness go to <http://drleedennis.com>