



360 Notre Dame St. Box 89 Belle River ON N0R 1A0
Phone (519) 728-3366 Fax (519) 728-2646
info@activelivingchiro.ca www.activelivingchiro.ca

A Common Sense Approach to a Good Diet and Good Health

By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil

As a Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician, I treat many athletes in varying levels of competition and fitness. These athletes, as well as non-athletes, constantly bombard me with questions of how do I get into better shape or how can I lose weight? What is the best diet or program to help me achieve a certain weight or level of performance? The truth is that a common sense approach to fitness is the most important way of looking at things.

Some people focus on the next or most recent diet to hit the news and they spend their time jumping from diet to diet. Their weight often does the same thing, fluctuating up and down. This is not only counter productive, it is actually unhealthy. Fad diets like the grapefruit diet, liquid diet, South Beach diet, and Slimfast are just that – fad diets. They come and go and are usually unreasonable in the long run for most of us to maintain. Other diets that have been around such as Weight Watchers, Body for Life, The Zone, and the Atkins diet have more emphasis on balance but may still be too demanding for some people. The best approach is common sense. We as humans, were meant to eat a balanced diet. We were not meant to eat extreme amounts of refined carbohydrates and sugars; these are not even found in nature. They come from combining and reducing things to create something very sweet, and hence, tasty. We were also not meant to eat only high protein, high fat foods. We are omnivores which means we eat from both vegetative and meat sources. The key here is balancing the two. This becomes easier if we consume whole foods. Those which have not been handled, altered, or refined. In short we should eat grains, nuts, vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, and eggs. The problem is we tend to consume the cheaper more refined versions of these foods such as cereal, granola bars, fruit drinks and juices, and things like hot dogs and lunch meats. If we strive to eat whole foods in their natural form, it will be much easier to make permanent changes in our dietary habits.

Other patients have questions about certain workout equipment that they have bought or seen on an infomercial. The Ab-roller, the Abdominizer, the Bowflex, the Thigh Master, and the Gazelle are examples of equipment bought from T.V. All of these things likely have some merit as far as being useful. The problem with them is that they are marketed as being very convenient. This also makes them very convenient to be shoved aside or stored in a closet or to become a rack for hanging your cloths. This very expensive, very convenient piece of equipment is very ineffective if you do not use it.

The same goes for certain workout routines that came along. Pilates, yoga, tai-chi, core training, circuit training, and cardio training; these workouts have all been deemed the “Best” workout ever at some time or another. All of these have some merit as well, but again, a common sense approach is much better. No matter how you choose to exercise or where you decide to do it, the most important thing is that you find something you enjoy. If you enjoy what you are doing, and you find it interesting, you will continue to do it. It is also necessary to find something convenient that fits into your lifestyle; however, some things in your life may have to change to make room.

In short, the road to health and fitness is not easy, but by putting too many demands on yourself when it comes to dieting or forcing yourself to do exercise which you hate only sets you up for failure. Instead, set some realistic goals for yourself. Write those goals down and review them often. Your goal might be weight-loss, running more miles, becoming a better basket-ball player, or just getting into better shape. Whatever you decide, set small goals so you have something to work for. Design and shape your exercise routine and diet according to what you wish to achieve. Create a schedule for your diet and exercise and make sure you allot time in your life. Use common sense, train within your means, and if you are just beginning, train as a beginner. Eat a balanced diet, more whole foods, less simple sugars, and smaller portions more frequently throughout the day. Ensure that you have an adequate supply of these foods readily available. Watch what you drink, avoid juices and sugary fruit drinks, avoid soda, and increase your intake of water. All of these things are common sense and will make achieving your goals much easier. If you are feeling overwhelmed take a deep breath and ask your Chiropractor for help or consult another qualified professional to help you reach your goals. Do not forget that a healthy balance also includes cheating just a bit. Just don't do it more than once a week!