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## **Exercise, Nutrition, Fat Loss**

By Mick Leone

In a previous article (Feb. 23, 1998) I mentioned that more and more of the population is becoming dissatisfied with medical treatment for ligament sprains and muscle strains. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Where do people go for guidance for overall health that includes strength, fat loss and proper nutrition?

We must be the educators for our patients on the healthy lifestyle. Many people receive this education at the local fitness clubs from people who are familiar with the subject, but rarely expert in the total health environment. I don't wish to undermine the efforts of these individuals, because they add positive value despite their questionable experience. Indeed, their active efforts have far more benefit than a medical prescription for weight loss pills or medically prescribed quick-fix diets. Chiropractors tend to be more involved in self-help methods for good overall health than our medical counterparts. We tend to be more exercise, fitness and nutrition-oriented. I believe it to be a good idea to educate the patient population to this fact.

I see this as another opportunity to further entrench ourselves in an arena that the general public is moving toward by the tens of thousands annually. It is not necessary to be a strength, fitness or nutritional guru, but you should have a fundamental understanding of these elements and a solid understanding of rehabilitation. Let's briefly examine the aspects necessary to keep us at the forefront of guiding our patients toward a total health concept, drug and gimmick free.

Weight loss, or more importantly, fat loss is of paramount concern for a healthy individual for many reasons. Problems from obesity are well documented. Heart disease, kidney trouble, diabetes, high blood pressure and liver trouble are just a few illustrations of the effects of being obese. Though the amount and kind of food we intake is not the only answer to reducing body fat, it is, along with exercise, the key elements. Your patients need to understand that improving their diets does not mean going on a "quick fix"

diet.

It is important to understand that each of the elements, carbohydrates, proteins and fats, are necessary for a healthy body, and that a lack or a glut of any of these can cause serious health problems. There are stacks of valid research that indicate the kinds of food eaten can be as detrimental as the amount. In other words, eat food that is unrefined.

Fat intake should come primarily from unsaturated fatty acids (safflower oil, canola oil and olive oil). Definitely stay away from fat products that are solid at room temperature. The various forms of margarine come to mind. These started out as substitutes for butter (animal fat or saturated fat). The problem is that for margarine to remain solid at room temperature, it has been partially rehydrogenated. This process creates a new type of fat currently known as trans fats. Many experts seem to think that these are even more deadly than the standard animal fats. My suggestion to you and your patients, therefore, is not to substitute margarine for butter, rather cut back on the butter intake.

The fast food market is replete with all the wrong things to eat. Refined breads, fried foods and meat, which is not only old in many cases, but which also contains unacceptable amounts of saturated fat. These are all things that we've known for years.

It's time to reeducate our patients to these dangers. Part of this education must include informing your patients that the body does indeed need fat. The job for all is simply to make sure the body gets the proper kinds.

The next controllable nutrient is carbohydrates. I believe this to be a very misunderstood food. Many think that eating low-fat meals will gradually reduce the percentage of fat that the body carries. Since they believe that more fat is the reason for putting on fat, they eat as much of the low-fat meals as they desire. When checking the contents of these meals, notice that the carbohydrate percentage is very high. Guess what, gang? The body handles excess carbohydrates by storing them as body fat. So where is the fat loss?

Have you noticed that since the beginning of the low fat or nonfat diet craze that statistically there are more obese people walking around than ever before? I guess the low fat and nonfat mentality should be replaced with a "right fat and carbohydrates in moderation" mentality. Help your patients understand the difference. I'm quite sure that they already ask you many questions regarding these exact subjects. Be the guide that they need.

Educate your patients to actively take charge of their own health. Part of this education must include trying to make people aware of the fallacy of crash diets. Five balanced mini-meals to include fats, proteins and carbohydrates will begin to behaviorally trigger the body's metabolism to increase its activity. By increasing metabolic activity, the body will attempt to eliminate excess baggage (fat), mainly because it is not being artificially slowed down by eating one or two meals per day. Five mini-meals or snacks per day keeps the body from going into survival mode, which starts to occur at about four hours after not having replenishment. When the body hits survival mode, it tends to store much of what is ingested as body fat.

Even though an individual may exclaim, "I'm losing weight," they may not be losing body fat. If the body requires fuel and can't get what it requires from what has been ingested, the body takes the avenue of least resistance and begins to eat its own lean tissue: obviously not what we want. Eat your balanced mini-meals every three to four hours.

Losing fat, however, will not occur properly without another major part of the health equation -- exercise! Exercise does far more for fat burning than even the most perfect eating habits. The "fountain of youth" revolves around actively keeping the body exercised. The best kind of exercise for losing fat, which also is fantastic for cardiovascular health, is aerobic exercise. Everybody knows that, right? Why are people avoiding doing the exercise and bent on losing fat with all of these nonsense crash diets? People exclaim, "I just don't have the time." Oh, really? I'll bet there's plenty of time to watch television. And, by the way, I haven't mentioned it yet, but here it is. It's better to educate and lead by example. That also means, doctors, that maybe you need to apply some of the same strategies for yourselves.

I work in a clinic with two other chiropractors, a massage therapist, and a semi-retired medical doctor. Of the five, two are grossly out of shape. They have poor eating habits and no exercise habits. Care to guess which ones are the culprits? How many of you are the same? Don't be a "Do as I say, not as I do" health care practitioner. Educate by experience and by example. Your patients will follow. Educate your patients properly! Exercise and proper nutrition needs to become the cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle.

The "cure for all this fat," as Covert Bailey phrases it in his book *The New Fit or Fat*, is "athletically trained muscle." This can only be attained by consistent, persistent aerobic type exercise. Follow through, guys and gals. The multitudes are looking for strong professional guidance from their doctors. As we become the exercise and nutrition counselors for our patients, the word will spread and the profession can only benefit.

## *References*

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