HEALTHY EATING 101—PART I

Conquering Carbs Is King
CARBS ARE THE PERFECT PLACE TO BEGIN OUR QUEST BECAUSE EATING THE RIGHT CARBS WHILE AVOIDING THE WRONG ONES IS THE KING OF ALL HEALTHY EATING DIRECTIVES. This all-powerful milestone for achieving nutritional excellence reigns supreme as the single most life-changing and life-saving nutritional maneuver you can make. Why? Because the right carbs can do wonders when it comes to guarding and improving health, while the wrong carbs can be downright disastrous. Unfortunately, most of us have gone wildly off-track in this respect. The average American—and especially American children—consumes copious amounts of the bad carbs and not nearly enough of the good ones.

The Great White Hazards
Let’s go ahead and get the wrong carbs out of the way first. I call them the “Great White Hazards” because, well, they are all white, and because they can wreak havoc on our health. This notorious bunch of menacing carbs includes white flour products, white rice, white potatoes, and sugar. Sadly, the Great White Hazards have inundated our food supply over the past 30 years, and our health has taken a painful pounding as a result.

The source of evil for the Great White Hazards relates to their rapid digestibility. Because of their lack of fiber, chemical structure, and more processed nature, it is very, very easy for our digestive systems to quickly break down these carbs into the simple sugar, glucose. As such, shortly after we consume these refined, white, “high glycemic” carbs our blood sugar (glucose) levels quickly soar upward to peak levels. Unfortunately, this “flash flood” of blood glucose offers up a host of potentially damaging consequences in the body, particularly in our hearts, arteries, brains and major metabolic organs like the liver and pancreas. Ultimately, the fallout from regularly consuming this nefarious faction of high glycemic carbs can be weight gain, obesity, metabolic syndrome, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, compromised brain function, and perhaps even some cancers. Yes, they can really be that bad.

Sugars Are The Worst
Sugar and foods containing lots of sugar, particularly sugary beverages like soda and desserts or sweets, deserve special mention. Honestly, it is not fair for me to “lump” sugar (no pun intended!) with the other Great White Hazards because these ever-popular foods and beverages are even worse for our health. Why? Because when we consume these sweetened foods, we experience both a flash flood of glucose and a flash flood of fructose in the bloodstream. Despite their varied names, all sugars and sweeteners are largely comprised of these two simple sugar molecules—glucose and fructose. Thus when you swallow any sugary food or beverage, the glucose and fructose they contain do not require “digestion.” They just zip right on into your bloodstream.

And regrettably, having lots of fructose rushing into the bloodstream appears to be even more ominous than spiking levels of glucose. The heavy load of fructose that is delivered directly into our bodies when we consume sugary...
fare creates all sorts of biochemical mayhem and metabolic stress. In fact, sugary foods, and particularly sugary drinks like soda, have emerged as the most fattening and metabolically disruptive of all forms of calories.

Indeed, studies support that the more sugary foods and beverages we consume, the more likely we are to gain weight and to develop the whole family of metabolic diseases, including metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease, heart disease, and dementia. And the rapidly absorbable fructose they contain is being singled out as the key culprit.

Tragically, most Americans are consuming enormous quantities of added sugars—to the tune of 18-23 teaspoons a day. That is 288 to 368 daily calories coming into our bodies just from sugar alone. And as you might guess, our pre-teens and teens have the most voracious sweet tooth of all, taking in an eye-popping 23-34 teaspoons a day!

Nutritional Weaklings
To add insult to injury, most Great White Hazards are nutritionally defunct—largely devoid of disease-fighting, health-enhancing nutrients. In striking contrast to the downright righteous good carbs you will be learning about shortly, the Great White Hazards have little to offer the human body other than calories. As a result of food processing, many of the Great White Hazards have had much of their nutritional prowess stripped out or destroyed, rendering them essentially powerless in the battle to ward off sickness and build health.

The Right Carbs To The Rescue!
Thankfully, we have four delicious categories of right carbs to nourish and sustain us. They include beans, whole-grains, vegetables, and fruits. These wholesome, “whole food” carbs generously provide the polar opposite of the wrong carbs, which is to say a dazzling list of nutrients and health benefits! In fact, offering your loved ones the right carbs in lieu of the wrong carbs is arguably the single most powerful step you could take to improve their health, vitality, and weight control.

The right carbs are home to a bounty of health-promoting agents including abundant vitamins, minerals and fiber, along with a spectacular array of special plant-based, disease-fighting compounds called phytochemicals. Additionally, unlike the Great White Hazards, these fiber-rich, unprocessed carbs are digested more slowly and will not assault the bloodstream with toxic levels of glucose or fructose. Hurray for that!

To get your family on the fast track to life-long health, make the commitment to replace the Great White Hazards in your home—especially sugary foods and beverages—with the right carbs. Doing so offers an unrivaled means to safeguard and improve you and your family’s nutritional health, and that’s an opportunity you don’t want to miss!
In striking contrast to the Great Whites, there is now a mountain of solid science telling us that the right carbs protect and maintain our health through a number of different ways. Honestly, the list of healthy accolades now attributed to eating the right carbs in lieu of the wrong carbs is simply magnificent. They can lower the risk of heart disease, improve gastrointestinal health, reduce cancer risk, guard against type 2 diabetes, and safeguard against obesity. And that is just the beginning! These amazing foods can also increase your energy and vitality, lessen pain, improve sports performance, enhance focus, boost brainpower, and ultimately bring you and your family more happiness and joy.

Read on for even more carb bliss.

**Miracle Beans**
I consider beans the most under-utilized and under-appreciated economical super food. Beans, along with their first cousins, peas and lentils, are like nutritional dynamite. They are exploding with key minerals and offer a healthy blast of B vitamins, including more folate than any other food. Of all foods, beans are also the reigning champions for fiber content, typically offering 2-4 times more fiber per serving than most fruits and vegetables! All of that fiber means that beans are much more slowly digested, which translates to a lower and more steady blood glucose response. Because of their robust dose of fiber and plant-based protein, beans are also fantastic for appetite and weight control. And last but not least, beans are teeming with potent antioxidants called flavonoids. At the cellular level, flavonoids provide broad-spectrum disease protection, and of the foods with the most disease-busting antioxidant power, four different beans make it into the top 20 list!

Because of their star-studded nutritional makeup, your family can always depend on beans as a versatile, convenient, cheap, tasty, satisfying, and remarkably good-for-all carb food. Canned, frozen, fresh or dried—all varieties of beans (yes, any bean you could name) are awesome. Whatever way you can serve them up, whether in bean dips, salads, rice dishes, burritos, stews, soups, chili, stir fry, or just by themselves, beans are destined to do the family good. So make sure your loved ones eat more of them! Daily is best.

**Awesome Whole-Grains**
Thanks to a flood of new science over the past 15 years, whole-grains are enjoying a nutritional renaissance. This wholesome group of starchy carbs is repeatedly popping off the scientific pages as one of the most powerful, disease-fighting foods nature has given us. From warding off heart attacks and type 2 diabetes, to protecting us from some cancers and dangerous belly fat, whole-grains are rapidly gaining on fruits and veggies as one of nature’s most life-preserving foods. Unlike their refined and processed Great White Hazard counterparts, namely white flour...
products and white rice, true whole-grain foods retain the full package of nutritional goodness Mother Nature so generously provided. Whole-grains are a treasure trove of vital nutrients, particularly vitamin E, B vitamins, fiber, and the minerals iron and magnesium. And like other plant-based foods, they are also stoked with health-boosting phytochemicals. Bottom line—whole-grains, particularly unadulterated, intact whole-grains, have rightfully earned a sparkling reputation for giving us more life.

Thankfully, opportunities to readily include more whole-grains in your family’s life are at an all-time high. This is welcome and encouraging news because the average American eats more than five servings of refined Great White Hazard-type grains and less than one serving of whole-grains a day. National surveys confirm that children and teens consume barely any—about one ounce a day—ugh!

The good news is that never before have there been so many 100% whole-grain foods available to consumers, particularly in the grocery aisles. From traditional American favorites like oatmeal, rice, breads and snacks, to the “comeback” ancient grains like quinoa, millet, and black rice, providing your family with great-tasting, 100% whole-grain foods is now easier than ever. And if you offer it, they WILL eat it. A recently published clinical trial found that kids offered whole-grain foods ate them as readily as refined grain foods.

### CEREALS TO AVOID

Unfortunately, many kids’ cereals are loaded with sugar. Based on a 2012 review by the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit research and advocacy organization, the 10 cereals with the highest sugar content (by percentage weight) included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cereal Name</th>
<th>Sugar Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg’s® Honey Smacks*</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post® Golden Crisp®</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg’s® Froot Loops® Marshmallow</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker® Oats Cap’n Crunch’s® OOPS! All Berries</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker® Oats Cap’n Crunch® Original</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker® Oats Ohls®</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg’s® Smorz®</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg’s® Apple Jacks®</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker® Oats Cap’n Crunch’s® Crunch Berries</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg’s® Froot Loops® Original</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I consider these cereals dessert, not breakfast!
To stretch my kitchen dollars and to add a nice dose of fiber and other prized nutrients to my meat dishes, like spaghetti and meat loaf, I always add a can of black beans or chickpeas to my recipes. My husband and kids love it, and it is an easy way for me to bring more beans into their diets while stretching out my red meat dollars. I buy black beans and chickpeas by the case from Costco or through Amazon.com.

Your Family Deserves Nothing Less Than The Best

Because of confusing and misleading labeling, I want to be sure you know exactly how to decipher true whole grain foods from their refined versions. If you are not fully versed in a fail-safe means to succeed, selecting true whole-grains can be very tricky. Meaning, there are lots of packaged and refined grain-based foods (AKA the Great White Hazards) slyly masquerading as whole-grains. Because your precious loved ones deserve the very best, be sure to use the two practices that follow to avoid being duped. First, if you are choosing your whole-grain foods in the grocer, you want to be sure that they are all made from truly 100% whole-grains. The easiest and quickest way to be certain is to simply look for the words “100% whole-grain” or “100% whole-wheat” on the package label. If “most” (i.e. 51% or more) of the grain in a product is whole, it can legally be labeled “whole-grain” or “whole-wheat”, even if the remaining 49% is refined white flour! So always look for “100%” on the label of any grain-based foods you are selecting, particularly bread-based products, to ensure a healthy selection.

A second reliable means to be sure only pure, authentic whole-grain foods make their way into your grocery cart is to scan the product’s ingredients list. In this instance, be sure that any type of grain listed has the word “whole” before it—for example, “whole-wheat flour” instead of “wheat flour” or “enriched wheat flour.” If you see any grain listed without the word “whole” in front of it, it's nothing more than refined (Great White Hazard) flour disguised as the healthier option. So buyers beware!

Choose whatever whole-grain foods your family enjoys, but strive for physically intact whole-grains and dense high-fiber cereals as your top choices. Although 100% whole-grain or 100% whole-wheat bread and bread products have the complete package of fiber and nutrients whole-grains provide, the physical processing required for turning them into flour means they will be more easily and quickly digested. As you understand from our former discussion of the Great White Hazards, this means that whole-grain bread products can push up blood glucose levels more readily (which is never preferred) than physically intact whole-grains. For this reason, I highly recommend you choose intact whole-grains like oatmeal, barley, quinoa, bulgur, and brown rice, etc. and dense high-fiber cereals over whole-grain or whole-wheat bread or bread products if you want to fully leverage whole-grains for your family’s health. For those who likely have insulin resistance (diabetics, pre-diabetics, and those with metabolic syndrome or weight issues), I recommend that you minimize all bread and bread-based products and stick to physically intact grains and high-fiber (five grams or more per serving) cereals to get the most from your whole-grain foods.

For optimal health, everyone should strive to include three or more servings of 100% whole-grains (preferably physically intact varieties) in their diets daily. A serving includes ½ cup cooked whole-grains, a single slice of bread or ¼ to ¾ cups of prepared 100% whole-grain breakfast cereal (check the cereal box's nutrition label for serving size).
Conquer The Carbs: The Healthy Kitchen Makeover

REPLACE GREAT WHITE HAZARDS WITH “HEALTHY” COUNTERPARTS

The Great White Hazards include: white flour products, white rice, white potatoes, and sugary foods and beverages. These quickly digested, high-glycemic carbs spike up your family’s blood glucose levels, which ultimately promotes hunger, weight gain, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Sugars and sugary foods and beverages also spike up your family’s blood fructose levels, which can further disrupt metabolic function and appetite control, making these foods especially fattening and menacing for health.

100% WHOLE...

Replace the Great White Hazards with their 100% whole-grain or 100% whole-wheat versions. Thankfully, you can now find the full range of flour-based products in their 100% whole-grain or 100% whole-wheat forms in most grocery stores. They include any brand of 100% whole-grain or 100% whole-wheat sliced breads, pita breads, bagels, English muffins, hamburger buns, deli flats, wraps, pizza crusts, tortillas, flat breads, waffles, and crackers. To be sure you are getting the real thing, look for “100%” on the package label. If you do not see “100%,” the product is sure to contain refined white flour!

For your baking needs, choose 100% whole-wheat flour, other varieties of whole-grain flours (brown rice flour, etc.), and whole-grain corn meal instead of white flour.

0% WHITE...

Keep in mind that white-flour based foods laced with lots of added sugar like donuts, muffins, pastries, danishes, toaster pastries, and sweet rolls are exceptionally unhealthy foods and should NOT be served for breakfast. If you bring them into your home (which I hope you do not), they should be served as an occasional treat or dessert.

TRASH IT...

Clear your kitchen of white flour-based foods: white bread, regular pasta, pastries, bagels, biscuits, rolls, buns, crackers, pancakes, waffles, dumplings, pretzels, pizza, pizza crusts, wraps and tortillas.

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For your pasta-based products, you have three healthy options—100% whole-wheat pasta, multigrain pasta, and bean-based pasta. My family has taste-tested all the “multigrain” pastas and we love the Barilla Plus™ brand (yellow box) the most. I promise that even with the pickiest eaters, it will pass as white pasta. I am also wildly enthusiastic about the Explore Asian™ brand of bean pastas. They are delicious and solely made from beans and water, which you know by now means they are gloriously healthy.

Replace white rice with brown rice, wild rice, and/or black rice. Brown, black, and wild rice are examples of “physically intact,” 100% whole-grains. Remember any type of “physically intact” whole-grain is always the healthiest choice.

If making the transition from white rice to brown rice is challenging for your family, try the quick-cooking, boil-in-a-bag brown rice brands (Uncle Ben’s™, Success™, etc.), or converted versions (Uncle Ben’s”). They all have a texture and color more similar to white.

Change out white potatoes for the healthier potatoes. Sadly, white potato-based foods make up about ¼ of all the vegetables consumed in America. With so many other remarkably healthy veggies to choose from, I know we can do better!

- Minimize white potatoes—baked, mashed, boiled, and especially fried. Be sure to avoid frozen french fries and hash browns, and keep the potato chips out.
- Replace white potatoes with the “healthier” potatoes—sweet potatoes, frozen sweet potato fries, and blue/purple potatoes.
- If white potatoes are a must, chose the small red, “baby” potatoes, also known as new potatoes, and serve them unpeeled. These immature potatoes have a lower glycemic response and will not spike up blood glucose like the other forms of white potatoes.

Keep all forms of sugary beverages out of your home! This includes soda, fruit drinks, energy drinks, flavored milks, flavored vitamin-enhanced and fitness waters, sweet tea, and bottled dessert coffee.

- Sports beverages should only be available to those engaging in heavy physical activity lasting more than one hour.
- Restrict 100% fruit juice. For those who are lean, active, and metabolically healthy, 100% fruit juice in very small amounts is acceptable. Eating whole fruit is always superior.

Limit dessert foods such as cakes, cupcakes, pies, cookies, candy, ice cream, etc. Train your family to make dark chocolate or fresh fruit their treat of choice.

Stay away from the processed foods notorious for containing lots of “hidden” sugar, including fat-free salad dressings, flavored yogurts, some bottled tomato sauces, sugary cereals (typically kids’ brands), flavored instant oatmeal, baked beans, and some breads. Check labels for the processed foods you may buy and keep in mind that four grams of sugar equals one teaspoon of sugar.
KEEP AN ABUNDANCE OF PHYSICALLY INTACT WHOLE- GRAINS IN YOUR KITCHEN

Of all forms of 100% whole-grain based foods, whole unadulterated, physically intact grains offer the greatest benefits for health and weight control. Shoot for at least two to three daily servings (a serving is ½ cup).

- Make brown rice, plain oatmeal (not flavored!), and quinoa staples in your cupboards.
- All are available for bulk purchase for an extraordinary bargain—some as little as 1¢ per serving!
- If you have access to wholesale grocers like Costco, stock up on these shelf-stable, healthy whole-grain staples.
- If you want to be a bit more adventurous with your intact whole-grains, try barley, wheatberries, farro, amaranth, triticale, black rice, millet, wild rice, or buckwheat. Most are now available in many standard grocers.
- The healthiest oatmeal is the plain (no sugar added) steel cut variety, followed by old-fashioned, and then the instant variety. Avoid all flavored oatmeal, as they are loaded with added sugar. Steel cut oats are now available from several brands in a quick-cooking form that is super convenient.
- Wheat germ and oat bran are both exceptionally nutritious grain-based “health foods.” Look for them in the cereal aisle.
STOCK UP ON BEANS

Beans are versatile, convenient, dirt-cheap, and exceptionally good for you and your loved ones! Offer them regularly—a worthy goal is one serving (½ cup) daily.

- Any variety of beans is fantastic, including black beans, edamame, butter beans, kidney beans, lentils, field peas, chickpeas, crowder peas, and many more.
- You can purchase them in various forms, such as canned (low-sodium, BPA-free is best), fresh, frozen or dried. Canned beans, believe it or not, actually have more antioxidants than fresh!
- Bean dips like hummus are also convenient and very healthy.

CEREALS

Replace Sugary Junk Cereals With Healthier Varieties

The right breakfast cereals offer one of the easiest and most convenient ways to tap into the wonderful health rewards whole-grain foods can offer.

- Make sure all of the cereals on your shelves are 100% whole-grain. Look for “100% whole-grain” on the label or check to be sure the word “whole” is listed before any grain noted in the ingredients list.
- To be sure you always make a healthy selection—refer to the “nutrition facts” box and be sure the cereals you select have at least five grams of fiber per serving and no more than 10 grams of sugar per serving. For younger children, three grams of fiber per serving is fine. For everyone, the less sugar the better!
- Do not be duped by cereals that say, “contains whole-grains” or “made with whole-grains.” In fact, these phrases are a dead-ringer giveaway that the product is not 100% whole-grain.
- In all standard grocers there are at least 20 varieties of cereals that fit the rules listed above. Some of my kids’ favorites include: Quaker® Oat Squares, Kashi Heart to Heart™ and Go Lean Crisp™ or Crunch™, Cheerios™, Frosted Mini-Wheats™, and Grape-Nuts™.