

Can eating nourishing foods - perhaps the most basic form of self care - improve your practice?

As a Registered Dietitian for going on 16 years, I'll admit I'm biased on this topic. I've personally experienced the transformation in energy, mood and health when eating a diet that is full of unprocessed, healthful foods. I've worked with thousands of patients and have seen that nutrition has great power and is a vital form of self care. Used in this way, nutrition helps us feel better, have more energy to be present with our patients, have more fuel to play with our loved ones and help manage, prevent and sometimes even reverse disease. Nutrition is integral in lifestyle medicine.

The number one question I get asked is "what should I eat?" followed closely by "what do you eat?" Since you're all healthcare providers, you likely know that diets full of fruit, vegetables and unprocessed foods should be the foundation of your diet. But I also know that there is not one best diet pattern for everyone. With the rich interplay of preference, culture, genetics and context, we each can create our own ideal diet. An ideal diet is one where we feel energetic, are in our best health, can reasonably maintain given our lifestyle and that gives us the energy we need to thrive during the day.

This month, I encourage you to take a look at your diet and see if and how you can make just one small change. Think about your patterns. Do you get so busy with patients you skip meals...and then overeat at dinner? Do you turn to caffeine and sugar to give yourself a 'boost' throughout the day? Do you find that you have trouble finding time to prepare healthy foods at home? Do you drink 'liquid candy'?

Working in healthcare and managing all your other life responsibilities can be a challenge. And yet so many of us let our own nutrition -- a foundational aspect for wellness and self-care -- fall by the wayside first. This month, let's see if we can all make some small improvements in the way we eat.

Think of one small goal you can make in your diet and set that intention for the next month. Write it down - on your calendar, make a reminder on your phone, type it on your screen saver, hang it on your refrigerator - whatever will help you remember your goal.

Ultimately, if we eat well, we're more likely to educate our patients on good nutrition and they're more likely to see us as credible. So if for nothing else, improving our nutrition can help improve the quality of care we provide for our patients.

If you have a dietary change you'd like to share with us, email UHAWellness@stanfordhealthcare.org. We'll remove names, but I'd love to create a word cloud that shows all the health changes UHA providers have committed to in the month of April.

Please check out the other documents in this section to learn more about recent research on nutrition and how to get started making your worksite healthier.

Be well,

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