

Breathe Easier with Good Food

It's not really surprising that there is plenty of research available showing that eating large amounts of **junk food is bad for our health**. These foods tend to be high in saturated fats and low in fibre, vitamins and minerals, offering concentrated calories and very little in the way of nutrition.

When we think of these fatty and sugary foods, most of us think about weight control and heart health. For instance some recent Canadian studies highlight the **damage to our arteries**, even in young healthy people, **from just a single junk food meal**.

The effects on the arteries after a Mediterranean-style meal were compared to a junk food meal high in saturated fat. The participants' arteries dilated normally after the Mediterranean-style meal but after the junk food meal they dilated 24% less. And two hours after the junk food, their arteries' ability to increase blood flow under stress had decreased by 15% to 20%.

Lead study author Dr Todd Anderson said if the arteries' decreased capacity to increase blood flow under stress becomes a chronic condition, there is an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

But new research is showing that a diet high in junk foods may have **other unexpected and adverse health impacts** that can start at a young age.

Researchers in New Zealand, Spain, Australia, Germany and the UK have been studying nearly 2 million children in more than 100 countries, attempting to shed light on the causes of asthma, eczema and childhood allergy symptoms. In their study of 319,000 teenagers aged 13 and 14 and 181,000 children aged 6 and 7, the researchers found some **interesting links between diet, asthma and allergy symptoms**.

They found that foods typically classified as junk or fast foods were the only food type associated with asthma and allergies across every age range and country. Teens in this group who ate 3 or more servings a week were 39 per cent more likely to suffer from severe asthma.

The good news is they also found a 15 per cent reduction in asthma rates in children who ate three or more servings of fruit daily.

While the researchers point out that their study does not prove a causal link between junk food and asthma, they believe it is worth researching if such a link exists. There are many great reasons to eat a diet full on minimally processed, healthy foods and new research seems to be adding to that list.

This Month

How to Make a Century



Our first class of the year will be on **Monday February 25**, starting at **6:45 pm**. Marcia, our nutritionist, is going to tell us the secrets of people who live to 100 and beyond and still live active and meaningful lives.

This Month's Menu

Once again you will be cooking healthy vegetarian dishes that also taste delicious. Here are some recipes that may be on the menu.

-  Wild Rice Salad
-  Stir-fry Greens with Tofu
-  Couscous with Currants and Almonds
-  Sunflower Seed Burgers
-  Carob Peanut Delight

Bookings

Bookings are essential so that we can buy the right amount of ingredients. Please email or ring Cheryl on 0403 848242. The cost is \$15 payable on the night.

Quotable Quote

"My doctor told me to stop having intimate dinners for four, unless there are three other people".

This Month's Recipe

Quinoa Stuffed Peppers



- ¾ cup Ivory quinoa
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp cumin-coriander powder
- ½ - 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2-3 garlic, minced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- ¼ - ½ cup frozen green peas
- ¼ - ½ cup toasted sliced almonds
- few sprigs of cilantro and mint
- salt to taste
- 4-6 colored bell peppers

1. Bring quinoa and 2 cups water/vegetable stock to a boil in a saucepan.
2. Simmer for 10-12 minutes until all the water is absorbed.
3. In a skillet, brown cumin seeds in 1 tsp heated oil. Add the onions, garlic, carrots, bell peppers along with salt. Let it cook for 4-5 minutes or until the vegetables are cooked.
4. Add the peas along with spices and cook for another 1-2 minutes.
5. Next mix in cooked quinoa until well blended along with chopped herbs. Add more seasoning to taste.
6. Meanwhile, bring a large pot with water to a boil. Chop the tops of 4 (or 6) bell peppers, clean out the veins/seeds and place them in the water for 1-2 minutes or until they are soft. Level the bottom of the bell peppers.
7. Once cooked, fill the quinoa pilaf into the peppers, garnish with mint leaves and toasted almonds. Serve hot. You can reheat them in an oven too.

What is Quinoa?

If any food deserves the title of "superfood," it's quinoa. Not only is quinoa high in protein, calcium, iron, and fibre, it's also gluten-free! Quinoa, pronounced KEEN-wah, is versatile and easy to make, and it contains omega-3 fatty acids for a healthy heart. In fact, quinoa is so healthy that demand for the nutrient-dense seed has recently skyrocketed.

But technically, quinoa is a seed, not a grain and it's grown high in the Andes Mountains of South America.

Quinoa is stocked with life-sustaining nutrients all across the board, including all eight essential amino acids. There are other highly beneficial compounds, vitamins and minerals in this food that the Incas reverently called "chisaya mama" (mother of all grains).

Vegetarians would do well to incorporate quinoa into their diet often.

Quinoa cooks very easily, in about 15 minutes. Like cooking rice in a stove top pot, you'll want almost 2 cups of water per one part quinoa.

Cook quinoa at a high setting until it starts boiling and then cover and simmer for about 12-15 minutes. When you see the ring-shaped sprouts popping out, you'll know the quinoa is almost ready. Stir the quinoa so all the water gets absorbed.

Quinoa by itself tastes rather bland. Add some coconut or olive oil and herbs or spices to add flavor and consistency.

Enjoy this food that the Incas valued as much as gold.

Life Expectancy

Healthy life expectancy is the number of years you can expect to live free of chronic disease and disability and enjoy good health. Health problems like heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, dementia, and depression decrease life expectancy. Physical disabilities and limitations can also lower life expectancy.

The number of years you can expect to enjoy a healthy life is the true measure of health in any country. It's not just how long you live.

Researchers listed the Healthy Life Expectancy for 187 countries.

The average Healthy Life Expectancy for all countries was 58.3 years for men and 61.8 years for women.

The countries leading the way in healthy aging were Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Spain, and Italy. In these countries, the average person lives 70 years in good health. Japan also had the longest life expectancy of any nation.

Life expectancy has increased at a faster rate than Healthy Life Expectancy. In other words, people are living longer, but not all that healthier.

Australia came in at 6th place for men and 9th for women.

To increase your healthy life expectancy,

- ✚ don't smoke,
- ✚ avoid obesity,
- ✚ get a half hour of exercise daily and
- ✚ eat a healthy plant food diet