

Chapter 10

The Forest, the Trees, and the Leaves

*“Health is beauty, and the most perfect health
is the most perfect beauty.”*

—William Shemstone (1714-1763)

The color green is associated with plant life, and symbolically with vitality and healing. In the previous pages we have seen some of the ways in which eating green foods can improve and sustain our health, and why the cereal grasses are superior green vegetables. It is important now to step out from among the trees of individual nutrient functions, to look at the forest—the big picture of good health and how it may fit into the picture of a good life. Ultimately, the measure of a healthy life is the extent to which we feel good in our bodies, in our relationships, in our communities, and in the world at large.

We are in a position to emphasize the important influence of diet on good health; that is the area we are most informed about. We think a part of being healthy is dietary awareness, but know that it is only a part.

The simple fact is, the types of foods which offer us the most protection from long term diseases are similar to the ones consumed by our ancestors. There seems to be every reason to get with it, dietarily speaking. But most folks are hesitant to make big changes in how they eat, even if they can see the clear advantages for themselves, for their families, and for the health of the planet.

We in the technologically developed countries can no longer afford the luxury of eating only the foods which taste best to us. Our modern taste preferences are conditioned to favor foods which are unbalanced in the direction of sweetness, saltiness, and fat content. It no longer makes sense to keep putting into your mouth whatever food is available and convenient and expect that it will all work out somehow.

A lot of information about health and diet is being circulated these days. Perhaps a specialist could sort through all of this information, but most of us need some kind of an overview of what makes us healthy and what makes us sick. Then with a little common sense and a few basic nutritional facts we can make our own informed choices about our diet and health practices.

“As long as a person takes active exercise, works hard, does not overeat, and keeps his bowels open, he will be free, even though the food he eats be coarse.”

—*Moses Miamonides (1135-1204 A.D.)*

According to some of the nature-cure advocates of the early 20th century, maintaining good health is really not complicated at all! They claimed that good health depends, simply, on the maintenance of proper assimilations and proper eliminations. This means providing our bodies with adequate nutrients and the wherewithal to get rid of the waste products of metabolism, cell debris and disease-causing elements. The body, given the proper tools and relieved of an excessive burden of backed up waste products, can achieve a state of health which far surpasses anything a doctor can provide for us with medicines. The combination of nutrient absorption and healthy bowel function provides a base on which abundant health is built.

This health overview still makes a lot of sense. The oldest health insurance is *vis medicatrix naturae*, or the healing power of nature described by Hippocrates. The best and most lasting cures are those which allow the body to heal itself, for no medical treatment can possibly cover all the physiological bases without jamming up a few of them. We need nutritionally adequate food, air, and sunshine in order to thrive, and in order for our self-healing mechanisms to operate.

The really good foods provide valuable substances for both assimilation and elimination. The most beneficial vitamin and mineral foods are roughage-containing plant foods which are deeply colored, such as the dark green and orange vegetables, and many of the fruits. Starchy foods such as whole grains and potatoes, which contain complex carbohydrates, are the best sources of food energy. They are often also excellent fiber foods. Proteins are most concentrated in animal foods, but are abundant also in fiber-containing beans, seeds, nuts, whole grains, and cereal grasses.

From this perspective, the ideal diet would include a wide variety of plant foods. Animal foods would be included, if at all, as supplemental foods. This

would allow the intake and absorption of all of the vital nutrients which our bodies need. It would also minimize the fatty foods and toxic breakdown products which our bodies need to eliminate. In addition, an abundance of unrefined plant foods in the diet provides ample amounts of all the food fibers which enhance proper elimination of waste products.

This simple approach to food consumption also describes the basic diet consumed in those areas of the world which are not plagued by heart diseases and many of the cancers common in our society.

It's really not that difficult to change what you eat! The hard part is facing whatever it is that makes you think you couldn't possibly change something so basic. Even if your palate is trained to like cheeseburgers and chocolate milkshakes, believe us—it is possible that you may one day like vegetable casseroles just as much, and that you could even come to find the burger and milkshake extremely distasteful. Most of us are former burger lovers.

Personal change is really only possible when you want to change. You probably really do want to feel better physically and better about your place in the world. The two most important tools you'll need are information and patience with yourself. As far as information goes, don't believe everything you hear or read. Get some basic information, then test out the particulars on yourself to see which ones apply to you.

The Bigger Picture

It takes more than a change of diet to get healthy and make the world a better place. Diet is only one important factor involved in our health. The other obvious contributors are exercise, adequate rest, fresh air, and moderate exposure to sunlight. The less obvious requirements for good health are involvement in satisfying social and personal relationships, and in work which is interesting and fulfilling.

Those of us who have worked extensively with information related to the well-being of the physical body are aware that such a state involves the assimilation of a wide spectrum of nourishing elements. We are nourished not only by foods and oxygen, but by giving and receiving love and inspiration, and by facing challenges and experiencing personal growth. If any of these processes is trivialized or ignored, we can never be really healthy.

Your good health and fulfilling life are important not only to you and to your family, they are important to all the rest of us as well. We would like to encourage you to nourish yourself to the best of your ability. We are

confident that maintaining an adequate level of green foods in your diet will contribute in many ways to your physical health.

But “eating more green” can mean much more than consuming your daily quota of green vegetables. Green is the color of life and growth on this Earth. Many of us are moving through our daily routines unaware of the vibrancy and joy of living which is abundantly available to every one of us. Green plants not only feed us, they provide us with the oxygen which is our breath of life, and with an example of the beauty of the changes that come with the seasons—the undaunted life energy that bursts forth in a mighty green blast every spring, no matter how harsh the winter which has passed.

We encourage you to take the steps in your life which you know will contribute to your health. If you are currently thriving, we thank you for the example and inspiration which you are providing for the rest of us. If your health and joy of life are not at full potential: “Eat more green!” It’s all around you.