



POKING FUN AT OUR EATING HABITS!

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All too often I see runners, bikers and triathletes spend hundreds and thousands of dollars on bikes, camps, equipment...yet completely ignore the "machine" (their body) that is actually doing the work. Meticulous attention is given to the heartrate, cadence, type of workout...yet somehow the food needed to fuel these workouts is given little more than a "Hmm, what should I eat? Or what's in the fridge?" thought. I've list a few tips below – note, this is not an all-inclusive, comprehensive list – it's simply a starting point so you can begin to create some awareness about the foods you are eating! Also, I've tried to inject some humor *only* for the purpose of remembering – it's *really* hard to make dietary changes and the implications of a poor diet can be very serious (poor race performance, workouts, heart disease, diabetes and so on): I do **not** take the subject of poor nutrition lightly as my cartoons might imply.



1. Eat enough. A dainty salad and a low-carb diet may satisfy your non-athletic friends but we're athletes working out many hours a week! Depending on the workout you could burn about 700kcal per hour --- that's almost 12 apples just from one little workout! So make sure you are eating enough. Signals that you may not be eating enough include late night snacking, thinking about food all of the time and constantly being hungry.

2. Know what you are eating. Please, please read the *ingredient* labels! Many foods are laced with **sugar** (fructose, corn syrup, fruit concentrate etc.), **trans fats** (look for "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" in the label), **MSG** (MSG, hydrolyzed protein, natural flavorings), artificial **chemicals** (most of the names you can't pronounce!) and other weird, funky substances. I believe the body runs best on clean, natural fuels – so read the labels carefully and a general rule is to go for products with ingredients that you know and can pronounce.



"Your French is correct, sir—that item is a sneaker filled with gasoline."



"Your condition is serious, Mr. Reynolds, but fortunately I recently scored some excellent weed that should alleviate your symptoms."

3. Be careful with supplements. I'm not anti-supplement – much of our soil, hence food, is lacking nutrients and minerals and vitamins are especially important for athletes. However, I do think it's important to know **why** you are taking a certain supplement and **how** that supplement works. Vitamin A is a fabulous anti-oxidant and wonderful for the skin but take too much of it and it can be toxic. Also, be careful with single supplements – our body is super intelligent and



carefully calibrates and makes sure we have the right balance of nutrients to function optimally. So when we douse our system with one particular nutrient it throws that balance off. For example calcium works carefully with phosphorus and vitamin D – take calcium alone these other puppies need to adjust their levels but may not have the large amounts available in order to do so. My point is know what you are taking and why. Just because your health food store guru tells you that spirulina is fabulous for athletes doesn't mean you should rush out and pay \$30 for pond scum – examine the research, talk to people and figure out whether this might be something you could benefit from. Unfortunately at the heart of some companies is the big green dollar and supplements do not need to undergo the same rigorous testing that drugs do...so just be careful.



"When did everybody stop jogging?"

4. Be careful with the latest craze! I can't tell you how many clients come in to my office, tell me they're training for a triathlon yet have zero carbohydrates in their diet. I can't even begin to imagine how sluggish they must feel when they workout! My point is – and not to pick on the late Mr. Atkins – but diet trends come and go and for the general population (and even for us athletes) they may have some value however we always need to keep things in perspective and see if they are appropriate for us: *our* bodies, *our* lifestyle. Mr. Atkins was right in that we, Americans, do

consume far too many *refined* carbohydrates – the bagels, the cookies, the candy, the donuts. However don't place whole, natural grains and other juicy carbohydrates like sweet potato, squash, fruits and so on in the same category. My point: just because everyone else is jumping on a particular bandwagon doesn't mean that bandwagon is right for you. Listen to your body and know whether the particular craze might be right for you.

5. Listen to your cravings. Our cravings can be our best asset – they give us insight into what might be missing in our diet. If you're tucked into the Ben & Jerry's late at night perhaps you didn't eat enough during the day? If you just can't escape that sweet tooth maybe you're not getting enough protein? If you're always craving chocolate maybe you're low in the mineral magnesium? If you're constantly reaching for the potato chips and pretzels maybe there's a lack of sodium? Willpower and deprivation may work sporadically to help resist cravings but perhaps instead of trying to resist them, try to **understand** them? Our bodies are marvelous machines which always try to maintain balance. You may think that these uncontrollable binges are "bad" and something to be avoided but don't ever think that the body is cluelessly directing you to the fridge just because it feels like doing so! Listen. Understand. Get to the root of the problem.



"We're running a little behind, so I'd like each of you to ask yourself, Am I really that sick, or would I just be wasting the doctor's valuable time?"



"I'm thinking of doing Pumploma this year."

6. Water. It's really basic. It's really obvious. But drinking enough water – especially a brand with minerals in it – is essential! Water also helps our muscles and flexibility thus preventing injury (tight, rigid muscles are far more likely to pull/get injured). Also, consume foods – like **fruits** and **vegetables** – that have a high water content. Yummy!

7. There are many reasons why we eat...and many factors impact our digestion.

In Eastern medicine the small intestine governs discernment and our ability to absorb – to discern and absorb nutrients, decisions, information, life. Stress, sleep, rest, our relationships, our work, our spiritual practice, our moods, our lives are constantly changing and how we digest is often impacted. Our best digestion happens when we are relaxed and happy (how many of us digest well when we are on vacation despite the fact that we might be eating rich foods and guzzling margaritas?). Our worst food choices happen we are stressed and in need of...of..."something" – however, when the cause is non-nutrient related – usually the "something" we are looking for is not found in food. It's found in sleep, in a less stressful life or job and so on. But hey, we all have bad days – I'm just pointing out to be aware of such days and to try and do your best to avoid these triggers.



"I'm not eating. I'm self-medicating."



"I started my vegetarianism for health reasons, then it became a moral choice, and now it's just to annoy people."

8. Enjoy and have fun with food. Food is fun, nourishing and the power behind great athletic performances. When you eat right you feel great. However there's a balance with everything in life so rather than analyzing every nutrient you also want to enjoy eating and nourishing your body. It's ok to be picky but make sure you enjoy that picky-ness! Relax, enjoy, experiment and have fun with food!

If you would like to contact Mel for a health consultation she can be reached at mel@melanieashmore.com. Happy Eating!