

Healthy Eating for Macho Men

It's no secret that men score low on the healthy food scale, as what many consider traditional "man food," usually contains heart clogging fats, cholesterol, sodium, sugar.

While chilidogs, salted chips accompanied by high calorie dips, large amounts of red meat, fried food, and breakfasts loaded with saturated fats might satisfy the ego of a "real man," studies show that a regular diet of these foods often results in irreversible harm to the body.

Researchers studying men's dietary health report that fats are one of the most important food groups in a healthy diet. The trick is to avoid or rarely eat artery-hardening foods like sausage, hot dogs, butter, high fat dips, high sodium chips and snacks. Try to avoid those mega breakfasts that are high in calories, saturated fats, fat, sugar and sodium. Opt instead for foods high in "good fats" such as cold-water fish, lean cuts of meat, chicken and turkey. Scramble eggs in a skillet sprayed with butter flavored non-stick spray, add some fruit and a piece of whole-wheat toast with sugar free jam for a satisfying, healthy breakfast.

Eating red meat is almost a constitutional right in America, and for many men it conjures up pictures of tough warriors and rough riding cowboys. The first casualty of eating too much red meat, full strength ice cream, doughnuts and highly processed snacks is cardiovascular health, and one of the earliest signs of heart disease is impotence.

Several studies indicate that a diet high in saturated fat can greatly increase the risk of prostate cancer. The four to six ounce steak at the dinner table greatly differs from the "mega ton" 24 ounce steaks served in many restaurants. Recent studies show a correlation between eating tomatoes and tomato products to helping prevent prostate cancer, by releasing lycopene during cooking. Adding whole grain breads and cereals to men's diets can reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, improve intestinal health and possibly reduce the risk of colon cancer.

Change is hard especially for men whose idea of masculinity is more swashbuckling than belt buckling, but a few substitutions can keep masculine bodies humming like a well-oiled machine.

Here are a few easy painless tips:

Replace white bread and pasta with whole wheat and whole grain products.

Eating brown rice instead of traditional white rice increases fiber intake.

Trade in the sugary snacks for dried fruits such as raisins, and apricots.

Double the tomato sauce and halve the high fat cheese when ordering pizza, and skip or order very little sausage or pepperoni, and add extra tomato sauce to spaghetti dishes.

Use low calorie dressings on salads and for dips.

Replace hot dogs, bacon, cheese and red meat with skinless chicken and turkey.

Substitute the many delicious flavors of frozen yogurt for full fat ice cream.

At the ballpark, skip the high fat, high sodium chili topper on your hot dog and opt instead for the high fiber vegetable, sauerkraut.

Keep bananas, grapes and small boxes of raisins nearby for eating on the run.

Choose baked tortilla chips, air popped popcorn or light butter microwave popcorn.

There is no need to sacrifice the fun of a tailgate picnic or watching sports events like NASCAR and the Super Bowl. Fill that six-foot long sandwich with low fat, low sodium chicken or turkey, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, grated carrots, onions, low fat cheddar cheese, and any other vegetables you like. Sprinkle a little olive oil, Italian seasoning and chives, or chili powder on top for an extra kick. Thinly spread light mayonnaise, just for taste, on both sides of the filling. Combine plain yogurt with your favorite spices for a tasty healthy alternative to high priced, high calorie store bought dips.

Limit beer and alcohol intake to two drinks. Flavored water is a healthy, refreshing alternative to sugary, alcoholic drinks, that won't leave you feeling bloated or worse.

Re-thinking and re-defining the term "macho-man," might just mean the difference between living a long, healthy, productive life, filled with the people and things you love, or a life filled with doctors, hospital visits and a plethora of prescription drugs.