

From the Heart...

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Wellness . . . it's all in the label, right?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 5, 2013)

Over the past decade there has been a significant shift in Americans wanting to be healthier. Harris Interactive published in their March 2011 Harris Poll report that awareness of key nutritional facts was high. About ¾ of American adults who responded, placed purchasing importance of fresh food at 89%, fiber 81%, whole grains 81%, fat content 80%, portion size 79%, calories 77, and saturated fat at 76%. Yet, specialized items such as gluten and vegan were at 33% and 20% importance, respectively.

Managing diet was also high for 7 out of 10 adults (protein 83%, fat 81%, whole grains 81%, calories 80%, saturated fat 79%, sugar 76%, cholesterol 75%, carbs 74%, and sodium 73%). The sugar and salt behavioral changes were reported for 57% of adults who monitor or restrict their diet. Also, local (71%) was supported, but organic (42%) was behind. And the older the population the more health conscious they were.

Yet, here's the trip-up. Although importance was high, actually dietary changes are much slower for most all generational groups, except for the oldest, at least on salt and sugar intake. Awareness has still created many nutritional initiatives, including changes on food labels, as well as increased interest in

obesity programs. As noted in previous Harris Polls "knowledge alone, while important, is not enough to change behavior."

The American Heart Association (AHA, June 2013) recently gave us some tips on reading labels. The first thing is to "note the size of a single serving and how many servings are in the package." Then comes the calories count per serving. Be sure to check serving size and how many servings per package.

The AHA recommends limiting total fat to no more than 56–78 grams a day, with no more than 16 grams of saturated fat, less than two grams of trans fat, and less than 300 mg cholesterol (for a 2,000 calorie diet). Yet, for many health-conscious Americans, as discussed in Agatston's books on his South Beach Diet, fat grams are considerably lower with little or no trans fats at all.

So, where do you draw the line and how do you interpret all this with the labels we read? Basically, the AHA recommends you be sure to maintain all the fiber, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and other nutrients you need each day. The amounts and calories, of course, depend on your age, gender, activity level, and whether you're trying to lose, gain or maintain your weight. What is amazing to me is so often they don't speak to the quality of the foods—whole foods.

Keep in mind that most nutrition labels that say "0 g" of trans fat, really mean less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. When the label says "0 g" of trans fat but includes "partially hydrogenated oil" in the ingredient list, it means the food contains less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. If you eat more than one serving, you could easily reach your day's trans fat limit. Here are a few examples of additional tips on reading labels:

- Calorie free = means less than 5 calories
- Sugar free = less than 0.5 grams of sugar
- Fat free = less than 0.5 grams of fat
- Low fat = 3 grams of fat or less
- Reduced fat or less fat = at least 25% less fat than the regular product
- Low in saturated fat = 1 gram of saturated fat or less, with not more than 15 percent of the calories coming from saturated fat
- Lean = less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and 95 mg of cholesterol
- Extra lean = less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol

For more tips on reading labels, to go the AHA website, <http://www.heart.org>, and type in search engine, *Reading Food Nutrition Labels*.

Here are a few words that will make it easier to remember all this. “Free means a food has the least possible amount of the specified nutrient. Very Low and Low means the food has a little more than foods labeled Free. Reduced or Less means the food has 25% less of a specific nutrient than the regular version of the food.”

The reality of food labeling is that not all ingredients or processing items are FDA required to be listed. Basically, anything which is considered a trivial amount and does not have a functional or significant nutritional effect in the food doesn't have to be labeled.

There are many exemptions with certain qualifications or limitations listed on the FDA website, such as delicatessen-type food, bakery products and confections sold directly to consumers from the location where prepared; Infant formula; dietary supplements; medical foods, fresh produce & seafood, and spices. Generally, a food package loses its exemption if a nutrition claim is made or nutrition information is provided. Others provide voluntary nutrition labeling through shelf labels, signs, and posters. For more details check out the FDA, <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm064894.htm>

Our desire to be more health conscious hasn't only changed our behavior but also many industries dependant on us buying their products and services. Next article will give examples of the industries that have shifted their manufacturing, marketing, and distribution as Americans become more committed to making life-changing decisions about their lifestyle and health.

Resources: http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/labels.html, <http://www.heart.org>, <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fat-grams/HQ00671>, <http://www.harrisinteractive.com>, <http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-labeling>

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From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Wellness . . . industries on the move

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Like most things in life there is always a cause and effect dynamic that changes the way we live our lives. When it comes to wellness and how we seek, reach, and achieve our highest potential, it begins with the choices we make.

The industries that serve what we are seeking get the message. It isn't so much that a particular healthcare or wellness sector has a totally selfless mission to better your life and health. Everyone has to make a living and businesses need to follow the cash flow. So, where you put your money and time will more clearly reflect what industries are ready to sell you what you want.

Our desire to be more health conscious hasn't changed only our behavior but also many industries that have depended on us buying their products and services. These industries have shifted their manufacturing, marketing, and distribution as Americans become more committed to making life-changing decisions about their lifestyle and health. In most cases, it hopefully turns out to be a win/win for both you and the particular industry or wellness sector providing the service or product.

That being said, let's look at a few healthcare/wellness related businesses that made some major changes in their services and product lines to keep their

bottom line viable, and hopefully support your wellness goals as well. Some just shift to other markets, while others only rebrand their products. Some actually improve their products and services for your health & wellbeing.

The first one has to do with the aluminum industry. Silvia Antonioli from Reuters (Feb 20, 2013 7:40pm EST) reported that "U.S. aluminum can sales are set to slow in 2013 for a third straight year as more consumers ditch sodas for healthier options such as water and iced teas, traditionally bottled in plastic or glass. The loss of market share in the fizzy drinks capital of the world, also due to loud anti-obesity campaigns such as those promoted by Walt Disney and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has forced producers of sheet aluminum for cans, as well as can fabricators, to seek new, more profitable markets abroad."

Another change that has raised the FDA eyes and ears are the energy drinks. Since 2009, a number of companies have changed their marketing of energy drinks from 'supplement' to 'beverage.' Ninety reports on Five-Hour Energy drink were received, with 30 claiming serious or life-threatening injuries, including heart attacks, convulsions and, in one instance, a spontaneous abortion (FDA claims report from 2004 to 2012 -

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofFoods/CFSAN/CFSANFOIAElectronicReadingRoom/UCM328270.pdf>). One of the many

concerns is these energy drinks may have high levels of caffeine in them.

Consumers often don't read the labels and drink large quantities (particularly teens and young adults); and companies don't seem to have a limit on how much caffeine is put in the drinks. A Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services

Administration 2011 study found more than 20,000 emergency room visits were linked to energy drink consumption

(<http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k13/DAWN126/sr126-energy-drinks-use.pdf>).

A more positive example for both consumer and company is a specialty produce business that ships all kinds of produce in North America. Their tag line defines their mission . . . to introduce a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that will change the way America eats. With many determined to make a difference in the health of our families, a “buy local movement” has surfaced over the years. LocalHarvest.org website was created in 1998 to offer a directory of local farmers markets across the nation. Boerne’s Farmers Market at the Cibolo is even listed, <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-market-at-the-cibolo-M52311>. There are other Hill Country offerings from San Antonio to Fredericksburg, Pipe Creek, Canyon Lake, Blanco, and more.

Whatever your wellness goals and health challenges may be, doing your homework is very important with a cross section of reliable resources, not just the company. Hype, misinformation, half-truths, and marketing targets abound. Businesses, big and small, all have a marketing strategy to attract your attention. Most of the time it begins with pulling on your emotions related to either a particular health challenge, wellness goal for your life, personal testimonies, or a need to belong (which is a basic human need for us all, of course). Some of what you will read and hear may strike a truth cord for you. Yet, keeping your thinking cap on will help prove it one way or another for your needs. It’s your choice and your life.

Here is just one market language example that draws in loyal followers from around the world . . . “Find more than a world-class company, locate a true community, Over 52 years ago, two men had a dream for a better life for their families. They built a company on principles, people and products that have touched millions of lives around the world.” If it works for you, wonderful. Again, it’s your choice and your life to see if the company’s products and services are a fit for you.

Even the Center for Disease Control has their own website to help you campaign and market your services and products, <http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/>. CDC includes tips for analyzing and segmenting an audience, choosing appropriate channels and tools, or evaluating the success of your messages or campaigns. And they claim it's all there in one place! Next article will give you some resources that will hopefully help you learn how to decipher fact from fanciful.

In the meantime, here’s a simple tenet to live well by . . . just eat whole foods and take cooking & baking classes to help you get the most out of the products and foods you buy.

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From the Heart. . .

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
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Wellness . . . Facts or Fanciful?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 19, 2013)

In today's medical world, wellness is the champion word for seeking, reaching, and achieving a healthier life and lifestyle. Yet, this word wellness can mean different things to different people, particularly in the healthcare field.

Yet, if we just stop for a moment to reflect on how we envision our lives of wellness, we just may come up with the same perspective on what is wellness. The simplest definition for wellness is a conscious decision, commitment, and sustained action to live a life of wellness in both body, mind, and spirit. Wellness is a wholistic perspective that embraces and impacts everything in our daily lives.

The challenge is to figure out how to begin seeking, reaching, achieving, and sustaining that long-sought life of wellness. Can you really believe what you read or hear from the wellness industry, from your family physician, the local health food store clerk, to the latest health & wellness magazine you subscribe to?

And with the many camps that try to attract and hold on to your loyal patronage of their products and services, I would imagine seeing is believing. Or is it? What works for Mary, does it also work for Jane or Jim? The first thing to hold on to is an open mind but a critical thinking one as well. What resources do

you use to find out the facts. Are those facts mixed with the fanciful claims of an expert marketing team or medical research team?

From my own personal 20 year journey back to health and wellness, I offer some of the more credible resources to consider. Believe me, not one has all the facts lined up at times, even myself (as much as I would hope to), and all of us tend to offer our anecdotal experiences and beliefs. What you hear and read at times may be useful or may not be. That's when you are the one who is center stage on the decision, commitments, and actions you take. Ultimately, the responsibility is yours how you use what you hear and read.

Every day some new article is published that changes the picture on any particular product or service you may be using. Whether it helps or hurts one can only wait and see, as you try to make the best decisions you can from experts and friends who swear by that product or service. Often times, that's when seeing is believing for many of us. We give it a try and see what happens. Hopefully, most of the time it won't hurt you, but there is no guarantees.

Over the years I have compiled a list (<http://celebratingyourjourney.com/Resource%20Links-Wellness.pdf>) of comprehensive wellness resources related to conventional and integrative areas that speak to our wellness—from Food, Government, Insurance, Labs, Law/Ethics/Advocacy, Medical practices/centers, Medical schools, Nutraceuticals, Organizations/Databases, Pharmaceuticals, to Publications/Research. Hopefully, it will help you find what you are looking for.

So, as you cruise through these resources, keep an open mind along with your critical thinking skills proactive. Here are just a few basic resources to start with:

Conventional resources— <http://www.webmd.com/>,
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>, <http://www.mayoclinic.com/>

Complementary/Alternative/Integrative resources—
<http://www.healthy.net/>, <http://www.imjournal.com/>,
<http://www.thenewmedicine.org/>, <http://www.bravewell.org/>,
<http://www.nationalwellness.org/>

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Wellness . . . Winding Down to Slumber Land

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 26, 2013)

“The lion and the calf shall lie down together but the calf won't get much sleep.” Woody Allen humorous quip actually rings true for any couple who just had an argument right at bedtime. This kind of timing definitely makes for a rocky night in slumber land.

Hopefully, you don't have too many of these sleepless or fretful nights, where you are barely able to get out of bed in the morning. These nights need to be few and far between when determined to live a life of wellness. Thomas Dekker (1572-1632) was an English Elizabethan dramatist and pamphleteer, a versatile and prolific writer who left us with “[Sleep is] the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”

So, how do you get just the right amount and kind of sleep that your whole being says “thank you!?” Here are some tips from Helpguide.org, another wellness resource to utilize. First, well-planned strategies are essential to deep, restorative sleep. One key secret is to experiment with what works for you. How much sleep do you need?

Tip#1: Keep a regular sleep schedule - Set a regular bedtime. Go to bed at the same time every night. Wake up at the same time every day. Nap to make up for lost sleep. Be smart about napping. Fight after-dinner drowsiness.

Tip#2: Regulate your sleep-wake cycle - Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone controlled by light exposure that helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle. Melatonin production is controlled by light exposure. So, increase light exposure during the day. This includes letting as much light as possible into your home and workspace.

Boost melatonin production at night by turning off your television and computer. If you don't, the light will suppress melatonin production; and television stimulates the mind rather than relaxing you. Try music or audio books instead. If your favorite TV show is on late at night, record and view it earlier in the day. Don't read from a backlit device at night (such as an iPad). Use an eReader that is not backlit and requires a bedside lamp. Also use low-wattage bulbs. When it's time to sleep, the room is dark. The darker it is, the better you'll sleep.

Tip#3: Create a relaxing bedtime routine – Keep the noise down, room cool, and bed comfortable.

Tip#4: Eat right and get regular exercise - Stay away from big meals at night. Avoid alcohol before bed. Cut down on caffeine. Avoid drinking too many liquids in the evening. Quit smoking. Alongside these areas, I offer an insert here that quality whole foods in the right quantity and balance will help you avoid drowsiness. The body often times becomes exhausted just from the type and quantity of food we eat, along with sleep disturbance.

Tips #5 through 8 cover Getting stress and anxiety in check, Ways to get back to sleep, Coping with shift work, and Knowing when to see a sleep doctor.

For more tip details go to Helpguide's website at

http://helpguide.org/life/sleep_tips.htm. Happy Slumbering!

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