

HEALTH



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Learn The Ten Basic P.R.I.N.C.I.P.L.E.S Of A Healthy Diet

Improve your stamina, in all aspects of your life

By Jamie Jackson Spannhake

As lawyers, we work long hours in the office and often at home over the weekend and during holidays. We also spend time commuting, taking the kids to soccer practice or dance class, walking the dog or playing with the cat, calling parents, e-mailing friends, having a drink with colleagues or clients, picking up dry cleaning, and much more. With so many work and life duties, it can be difficult to eat well and maintain a balanced life.

But good nutrition and balance are vital to our lives and our practices. As Vedia Jones-Richardson, a lawyer and Chair of the ABA's Law Practice Management Section, recently stated in her opening remarks to a panel discussion on work/life balance: "Those who achieve lasting success in any endeavor know that, over the long term, you produce best when you are living your best life...In the practice of law, the most critical tool is ourselves. So we must take care of ourselves to produce our best. Not to do this is to work against yourself."¹

Focusing On Good Diet Is Simple And Immediately Rewarding

One of the easiest places to start on the path to balance and good health is with our diets. Focusing on good nutrition doesn't take extra time or energy—it's not like adding a new exercise regime. It's also not difficult or time consuming, and the benefits are immediate. Improving our daily diets helps us maintain the stamina we need to practice law, live a life outside of the office, and fulfill all our various duties.

While you may be familiar with the ten basic P.R.I.N.C.I.P.L.E.S. of a healthy diet outlined here, knowing them is not the same as putting them into practice.

Learn The Ten P.R.I.N.C.I.P.L.E.S.

P is for Protein

Whether you're a vegetarian or a meat-eater, we all need protein because it is a basic building block of cells and tissues. Our bodies use it to maintain and regulate vital functions. Good sources of protein include meat, eggs, fish, beans (especially with whole grains, like brown rice), yogurt (without sugar added), legumes (peanuts and soy beans), and nuts.

R is for the Right amount of food

Our optimal calorie intake depends on body type, metabolism, level of physical activity, and any special conditions like inherited traits or diseases. One of the biggest causes of overeating is undereating: if you fast all day, you will very likely overeat when you finally sit down to a meal. This is why it is so important to not skip meals, especially breakfast. Listen to your body. Count your calories and pay attention to the kinds of calories you are consuming (protein, fat, or carbohydrate) for two weeks in order to figure out the right amount of food for you.

I is for Irrigation

Your body cannot function without water. Drink at least 8 glasses per day.

N is for Natural

"Organic" means grown and prepared without pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, or hormones. The body views all of these as pollutants and works hard to get rid of them. Give your body a break so that it can focus on other processes like maintaining good digestion and a functioning immune system, and burning fat.

C is for Caffeine

Limit your caffeine intake—for many reasons. Caffeine stimulates the excretion of stress hormones which can increase your anxiety, irritability, muscular tension and pain; cause indigestion and insomnia; and decrease your immunity. At the same time, caffeine inhibits the absorption of some nutrients and causes the urinary excretion of calcium, magnesium, potassium, iron and trace minerals. It's also known to cause blood sugar levels to drastically decrease leading to imbalances that cause sugar cravings. Try to limit your daily intake to less than 100 mg, which is the average amount in one 8 oz. cup of coffee.

I is for foods that are Intact

Whole foods have all the nutrients that nature intended us to eat: processed foods are stripped of these nutrients, and then "fortified" in an attempt to add the nutrients back in. Why not just eat the whole food? Consider brown rather than white rice, whole wheat rather than white bread, whole fruit and vegetables rather than fruit and vegetable juices, and natural sweeteners like honey and maple syrup rather than table sugar or corn syrup. A good rule of thumb is, "If man made it, don't eat it." Think natural.

P is for a daily Pill

Taking a daily multi-vitamin is the simplest thing you can do for your health. If you take it at the same time and place every day, it will become a habit. Visit your local health food store for a whole-food based, natural vitamin that's right for your body

based on gender, age, and any special needs you have.

L is for Leafy greens and other green vegetables

Leafy greens and other green vegetables are the foods most conspicuously absent from the average American diet, which is a shame because they are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber—and low in calories. Try to have leafy greens or at least green veggies every day. Good choices include spinach, broccoli, broccoli rabe, bok choy, and collard greens. You can also try adding a small salad to your lunch or dinner, or have a big salad for one of your daily meals.

E is for Eating

To avoid undereating (which, as I mentioned above, causes overeating), have healthy snacks on hand: this way, you never feel so famished that you have to binge to compensate. Good, portable and healthy snacks include fruits and veggies (apples, grapes, carrots), plain yogurt with fruit, nuts, natural peanut butter with celery or banana, and organic dark chocolate.

S is for refined Sugar

Many people think of refined sugar as a quick source of energy, but it actually is more draining than sustaining. Not only does refined sugar contain no nutrients, but our bodies actually have to use their own mineral reserves to digest it. In other words, eating refined sugar creates more deficiencies than eating nothing!

Refined sugars are most commonly called sugar, sucrose, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, glucose, or fructose. They are in almost all processed foods including muffins, breads, cereal, fruit juices, tomato sauce, ketchup, salad dressing, cakes, cookies, desserts, and even canned vegetables. Replace these sugars with natural sweeteners like honey, maple syrup, and stevia. (Stevia is an all-natural herb that grows as a small green shrub in its native environment in Paraguay. It has zero calories and can be found at all natural food stores.)

Bonus: Eat mindfully

So often we eat while we are working on our computer, watching TV, or on the run. Instead, pay attention to what you are eating. Look at your food; smell it; *enjoy* it.

Eating healthfully by following these basic P.R.I.N.C.I.P.L.E.S. won't alleviate any of your responsibilities, but it will help you maintain the stamina you need to accomplish everything in your busy life and to feel more balanced and fulfilled.

Upcoming articles will explore each of these P.R.I.N.C.I.P.L.E.S. in greater depth to further explain the importance of good nutrition and provide tips and tools for easily incorporating healthy eating habits into everyday life.

FOOTNOTES

1. Introductory remarks by ABA Law Practice Management Chair Vedia Jones-Richardson for the opening panel discussion *Living a Life in the Law*, presented at the American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section's Spring Meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 2008.