

Staying Healthy in the *Fast Lane*

9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health
and Real Healthcare Reform

Kirk Hamilton

Prescription
2000 Inc.
"Be and Stay Well"

Sacramento, California

This book is for educational purposes only. This book is not intended as a substitute for medical advice from a physician. The reader should regularly consult a physician in all matters relating to his or her health, and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

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Prescription 2000, Inc.
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Sacramento, CA 95825

Visit our Web site at www.Prescription2000.com

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition: July 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011902260

ISBN 978-1-890302-11-5

Cover design by Jamie O'Neal with modifications
by Konstantin Koryaka and Gwyn Snider
Interior Book Design by Integrative Ink
with modifications by GKS Creative

What Others Say About Kirk Hamilton's **Staying Healthy in the *Fast Lane***

"The time has come for every American to take charge of their health destiny and give up the false notion that doctors and drugs will save us as we commit slow suicide with food. The reliance on drugs is a proven failure and we have an overweight, sickly, and cancer-prone population to prove it. Kirk Hamilton does his homework; *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane* by Kirk will put you on track to a long, healthy life."

Joel Fuhrman, MD
Best-selling author of *Eat To Live*
Family Physician and Nutritional Researcher
DrFuhrman.com

"Kirk Hamilton has developed an objective, precise, and clearly defined protocol for not only staying healthy but also optimizing your physical, emotional, and psychological health. There are no shortcuts, but once you begin to accept and implement his simple suggestions, you'll be on the path for a lifetime of renewed health. A very powerful book, and one that I've added to my health library."

Dave Scott
Six-time Ironman Triathlon Champion
Dave Scott, Inc. Boulder, Colorado

"Kirk Hamilton has an excellent reputation in integrative medicine and in addition is an intelligent medical reporter and writer. He uses many years of clinical experience in writing this new book. It is an excellent source of information for the patient and clinician alike. In addition, the book

provides easy to understand guidelines for staying healthy in the modern world. I recommend that you read and use this helpful information.”

Burton M. Berkson, MD, MS, PhD
The Integrative Medical Center of New Mexico
Author of *The Lipoic Acid Breakthrough*

“This book contains an important and often overlooked perspective on the diseases of civilization. More importantly, it offers a detailed and practical method for enhancing and maintaining health that would be appropriate for people of all ages.”

Robert Krikorian, PhD
Associate Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neuroscience
Director of the Cognitive Disorders Center
University of Cincinnati

“I love the simplicity with which Kirk has addressed the health problems we face at the societal and individual levels and also the remedy to rectify them. The strategy is basic, straightforward, entirely effective, backed up by thousands of scientific articles in the literature on the importance of a whole-food, plant-based diet, a consistent and progressive exercise routine, and an overall positive approach to life. Anyone who is afflicted with chronic disease or who wants to avoid such calamities in the first place should read and apply Kirk’s methods.”

John E. Lewis, PhD
Assistant Professor
Director of Research for Complementary and Integrative Medicine
Associate Director, Medical Wellness Center,
University of Miami School of Medicine

“Kirk has an eternal spring of healthy information unlike anyone I know. He is passionate and brilliant and 100% committed to helping YOU reach your optimum health. Read and enjoy this book!”

Rip Esselstyn
Texas Fireman
Former World Class Professional Triathlete
Author of *Engine 2 Diet*

“Information overload is wearing us all down. Health-wise, how can we figure out what really matters and what really works? Kirk Hamilton’s book provides the answers. Everyone should read it and apply its wisdom to their lives.”

Mark Scholz, MD
Medical Director, Prostate Oncology Specialists
Marina Del Rey, California
Co-author of *Invasion of the Prostate Snatchers*

“As we get older, life passes by with increasing velocity. Thank goodness Kirk Hamilton has condensed the important elements of staying healthy so we really can fit it into our busy lives. His advice is practical and doable—so just do it and stay healthy.”

Peter Starr
Film Producer
Chairman, *Healing Arts Education Foundation*

“Kirk Hamilton has synthesized the best scientific health information with his extensive knowledge as a medical clinician and healer. His health manual is a prescription for getting well and staying well, replete with practical ‘steps’ that any person can take to start the process of recovering their mind and body. Read the book now and get started on your road to recovery!”

Martin P. Gallagher, MD, DC
Board Certified Family Physician
Physician Acupuncturist
Medical Wellness Associates

“Don’t look to the White House or the Senate for healthcare reform. Turn instead to Kirk Hamilton’s comprehensive guide *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane*. It’s a real page-turner that explains with clarity, detail, and passion how we can (and must) take responsibility for our own healthcare reform. The steps that Hamilton outlines for us are medically sound and well worth taking.”

R. Keith McCormick, DC
U.S. Olympic Team member
Ironman Triathlon competitor
Author of *The Whole-Body Approach to Osteoporosis*

“Kirk has brought together science with real-life experiences. His ability to bring in his personal life adds a touch to this book that others do not have, yet allows the readers to relate to circumstances they may be going through themselves.”

Stella L. Volpe, PhD, RD, LD/N, FACSM
Professor and Chair
Drexel University Department of Nutrition

“Thank you for this well-thought-out book targeted to help the confused and overwhelmed typical American patient. The clearly defined steps you describe will take many people by the hand and lead them to good health and well-being. This book will be a must-read for patients in our clinic.”

Jeanne Drisko, MD, CNS, FACN
Riordan Endowed Professor of Orthomolecular Medicine
Director, Program in Integrative Medicine
Complementary and Alternative Therapies
University of Kansas Medical Center

“The goal of most of my customers in the fitness industry over the past 30 years has been to lose and maintain weight, exercise to health, and alleviate stress while conducting a busy life with severe time constraints. Kirk Hamilton has provided a concise, compact prescription with a template for just that population. We can use his book as the blueprint in the fitness industry to educate and assist busy people to the results and lifestyle they desire. Kirk is a dedicated researcher and medical practitioner who brings the best of research, medical, and alternative information, matched with his passion and intensity. This book is an excellent summary for the lay public and fitness professional. For those looking to simplify the plethora of information available on health, weight loss, and exercise, Kirk’s book is a quick recipe to success.”

Galen Miler, President
Millennium Sport Clubs

“I have known Kirk Hamilton for several years. Kirk has supported family, friends, and strangers alike in venues in and out of the health field. He is a man of his word. After reading *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane*, I realized immediately the value given in his TRIAD Wellness Program’s 9

Simple Steps to Optimal Health. If you care about your future health or the health of a loved one, this book is a must-read."

Michael J. Papa, President of Breit International, Inc.
Author of *Good Communication: A Lost Art*

"Kirk Hamilton has been someone that I have respected and turned to for knowledge over the past 15 years. His latest book *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane* is another example of his invaluable approach to health and well-being. What is so often neglected in a health program is the individual's responsibility to make healthy choices. So many people are looking for the magic combination of supplements that will undo all of the harm that their lifestyle habits cause. Kirk's latest publication gives the reader all of the information that they need, but also emphasizes that the first line of defense against chronic disease is choosing a healthy lifestyle and diet. This is a must read for anyone looking to improve their health using a common sense approach well steeped in science."

Emmett J. Hughes, DC, MS
Associate Professor of Basic Science
University of Bridgeport College of Chiropractic

"Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane is solid and exciting information to help us all stay in good health. Kirk Hamilton searches for answers with untiring zeal. It is to the advantage of pharmaceutical companies to turn 'symptoms,' that can be corrected by diet, into diseases that are then treated with drugs. By following Kirk's guidelines, you can escape the trap and have a vibrantly healthy life. Kirk is a searcher, researcher, and a teacher of good health in an untiring, exciting way. This is a wonderful book that will help thousands of people have a happier, healthier life. Read it and follow it—you will be glad you did."

Barbara Stitt, PhD
Author of *Food and Behavior*

"The landscape of health is changing, with a comprehensive integrative approach to healthcare emerging. *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane* is a valuable resource for today's families, as it informs and inspires with smart, sensible and savvy tips to help protect and restore the health of our loved ones."

Robyn O'Brien, Author of *The Unhealthy Truth*
Founder, AllergyKids Foundation

Staying Healthy in the *Fast Lane*

9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health
and Real Healthcare Reform

*To my beloved mother, Adela, for her "you can do it!" belief in me.
I know you are with me every day...*

*To my beautiful daughter Mya, Ken and
their children, Ava Jane and Drury,
you inspire G-Paw to keep working at his dream
of making this a better and healthier world.*

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9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health

TRIAD Wellness Program

3 Phases x 3 Steps

I. TRIAD Diet Program:

1. **EAT whole, unprocessed foods** (90 percent or more as plant foods, if not all plant foods).
2. **EAT** at least half your food intake as **vegetables**.
3. **ELIMINATE** all **dairy products** or eat from the **Basic Elimination Diet (BED)** for at least one month.

II. TRIAD Exercise Program:

4. **DO** a half-hour minimum of daily **aerobic exercise**.
5. **DO strength training** (circuit training) fifteen to thirty minutes, three to four days per week.
6. **DO flexibility training** (tai chi, yoga, Pilates, stretching) ten to sixty minutes daily.

III. TRIAD Mind-Body:

7. **BE thankful** for five minutes, morning and evening.
8. **SIT quietly** for fifteen to sixty minutes daily.
9. **IMAGINE your ideal health** and life daily for five to fifteen minutes. Think about what you want, not about what you don't want. Write it down. Picture it!

It is an honor to have Dr. David Jenkins write the Foreword to this book. I have been fortunate enough not only to have read his scientific work but also to have interviewed him on multiple occasions over the last fifteen years. His credentials and responsibilities speak for themselves—among them: Canada Research Chair in Nutrition and Metabolism; Professor of Medicine and Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto; Director, Risk Factor Modification Center, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, Canada; and the developer of the Glycemic Index and Dietary Portfolio. That said, what I am most impressed with, and inspired by, is his commitment to preventing and reversing chronic disease with a lifestyle approach that protects the environment and other life forms, utilizing scientific plant-based nutrition. His thoughtful leadership in this arena will help preserve mankind's health and our mutual home, planet Earth, for generations to come.

—Kirk Hamilton

Foreword

In 1988, Boyd Eaton published “Stone Agers in the Fast Lane.” It was a call to return to a Paleolithic diet much higher in meat and animal products than eaten in the 1980s or even today. Now Kirk Hamilton has written *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane*, a call to limit the dependence of Homo sapiens on animal foods.

Both publications share a common theme: that the modern lifestyle is not in keeping with the requirements of human physiology. The evidence for this mismatch comes from the figures for obesity and diabetes now in evidence in Western nations, with diabetes alone at 8 to 9 percent in North America and predicted to double in the next twenty years. If this scenario holds true, we will see an increase in renal failure, blindness, and cardiovascular disease together with many cancers. For these reasons, public awareness must be stimulated, and much research undertaken, with translation of this knowledge to the public so that effective preventive strategies are put in place.

Kirk’s focus has been to stem those lifestyle and dietary factors, which he sees as the problem in both industrialized and developing countries:

- Increased consumption of animals products
- Increased consumption of added fats and oils
- Increased consumption of added calorie sweeteners
- An *increase* in processed grains worldwide, with a *decrease* in developing countries of the percentage of calories from grains compared to other food calories
- A decrease in physical activity

The first diet rule in Kirk's *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health* is for 90 percent or more of the diet to be unprocessed whole plant foods. The other 10 percent is optional as animal foods, but it is not necessary and not recommended as such.

Kirk is clearly committed to plant-based nutrition as a major theme of the book—not only for chronic disease prevention and reversal but also for protection of the ecology of the planet for a world population approaching 7 billion people.

This aspect of the book is, for me, of major importance. It is also what differentiates this book from other good health manuals. We are losing possibly one species every fifteen minutes. By 2050, the rainforest will be destroyed and all fish stocks will be depleted. Mankind must change his ways not only for himself but also for his planet. This book shows that by eating in a way that protects other life forms and the environment, we can maximize our health and also prevent and reverse the epidemic of modern day chronic disease.

David J.A. Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc

Preface

This book *really* started in the last quarter of my physician assistant training at U.C. Davis in 1983. One of our projects was to outline a book. I remember vaguely calling it *Lifestyling*. The concept of the book was about prevention of disease and staying well by having a good diet, exercising, and doing some stress reduction.

Throughout my more than quarter-century of being a practicing PA (physician assistant), I have always been a nutrition research junkie. I have also written newsletters, given talks, done some radio, and have tried to practice what I preached by living a lifestyle that involves a lot of exercise, a pretty good diet, and reasonable attempts at stress reduction...well, two out of three isn't too bad! Actually, I feel so blessed to have followed this path. If I hadn't been working on those three key aspects of wellness all these years, I probably would have been in a whole lot of trouble health-wise by now, especially because of how much pressure and work I put on myself.

Within six months of working in my first "alternative medicine" practice in 1983, I came up with a one-page handout for patients called *Optimal Health*. There were six key components: (1) Spirituality, (2) Exercise, (3) Nutrition, (4) Stress, (5) Environment, and (6) Self-Care. This handout summarized what I thought an individual had to practice daily in order to be in "optimal health." I have it on my wall today in my home office. I still believe in 90-95 percent of the recommendations more than a quarter of a century later. They are really the fundamental principles in *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane*.

In the mid-1980s, while still practicing as a PA in a nutrition prevention-oriented primary care medical practice in Sacramento, I also became a massage therapist. During those two to three

years of training, I received an overview of Chinese medicine as well as firsthand experience of how powerful our emotions are in affecting our health. It was clearly evident that if emotions were not expressed appropriately, they could cause disease. During this same time, I attempted to start an early version of a health coaching business called Lifestyling. I wasn't successful, but always at my core, I realized real healing and wellness occurred *outside* the exam room. It was extremely clear that what people do daily in the three areas of diet, exercise, and stress management, or the mind/body connection, are the keys to health and wellness.

It had dawned on me by then that most of the patients I and most other health professionals saw really would not need to be seen if they effectively implemented good diet, exercise, and mind-body practices. Little did I know then that those three components—diet, exercise, and stress management—would turn into the **TRIAD Wellness Program** and the *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health* more than two decades later, and are the foundations for achieving the goal of this book...for you to be well and stay that way in the busy, modern world and use health professionals and related services minimally.

I have always had this book in my consciousness but felt a greater, more immediate passion between 1989 and 2004 to educate health professionals on current nutrition and prevention research. Why? Because working in an alternative or integrative medicine practice we were always criticized for not practicing scientific medicine. So for those fifteen years, I reviewed one to two hundred medical journal papers each month, summarized the research into newsletters, books, and databases, and did more than 650 interviews of medical researchers from all over the world on current medical research in nutrition and prevention. I learned a lot, earned a good reputation among my peers, worked very hard, and sold that business (Clinical Pearls) in 2004.

Very thankfully, that research, found in the "Clinical Pearls" database, is alive and well thanks to Raj Chopra Sr. of Tishcon Corporation. Not only has Tishcon Corporation kept the database going, but they also made it better and free to health professionals and the public at Vitasearch.com. I continued to do "Expert Interviews"

for Vitasearch and am approaching one thousand interviews since 1994, when I started. All that data and experiences regarding nutrition and prevention research are intertwined in this book, *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane*.

Over the next four years (2004–2008), I continued to see patients and conduct written “Expert Interviews” for Vitasearch.com. During this same time period, my mother developed pulmonary fibrosis. Like so many sons and daughters nowadays, my siblings and I took care of our mother. Our goal was to assist her in remaining as independent as possible, with the least amount of invasive medical intervention, and to keep her at home, surrounded by her loved ones, at the time of her passing. We did it. And we did a good job. I learned a lot firsthand about what I had been seeing in my patients for the last ten years or so: not only chronic health problems in my patients but also a new problem of how children and spouses now have to take care of an ever-growing unhealthy, aging population with a multitude of chronic diseases.

These patient care experiences, along with taking care of my mother, had a profound impact on me. These experiences reinforced the need in my own life as I passed the half-century mark, as well as in my patients (and society), that the daily practice of these three lifestyle components (diet, exercise, and stress management) were not only very important for staying well but also for our society to remain viable socially and economically as it rapidly ages.

During those four years, a *burn* deep inside me was starting to develop again. It had a sense of urgency and renewed passion to it—to really get back into the health education game and make the impact that I believed was possible. But this time my focus was on the public first and professionals second. The time was now for a book for everyone—not just health professionals interested in nutrition and prevention research but for people like my patients. As I mentioned previously, it was becoming even more obvious to me that most of my patients really wouldn’t need to be in my office and the offices of others if they practiced some daily basic health promoting principles. In fact, it has become obvious to me that the whole *healthcare reform debate* has nothing to do with the gov-

ernment really. *It has to do with you and me practicing these basic principles of wellness on a daily basis. Healthcare reform is your personal responsibility.* That is a major theme in this book.

When my mother passed, which was the most beautiful family experience of my life, it became very clear that it was time for me to embark on this book that I have had in my consciousness, practiced personally, researched, and taught about since 1983. By the end of 2008, it was “go time.” The only thing standing in my way to writing this book was my own fear of failure and more hard work.

Then things began to fall into place. The universe started sending the opportunities my way. The pieces for this book came together quickly. I designed a five-part *Staying Healthy* lecture series (*Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane, Reversing Diabetes, Reversing Obesity, Reversing Heart Disease, and Healthy Aging*) and began to teach again. It reminded me how much I loved and missed being up in front of people, sharing solid self-help information. It also reminded me of how life-giving and healing teaching and sharing information with others is for me.

The ultimate goal in this *Staying Healthy* series was to show where the modern, industrialized world was heading with the ever-increasing incidence of chronic diseases and their human and economic costs. My intent for these seminars was to show that lifestyle factors, especially dietary changes, that have occurred over the last fifty to one hundred years as the world industrialized, are the main causes of these largely preventable chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes, obesity, etc.), *not bad genes*. From researching, preparing, and refining this five-part series, along with interviewing wonderful physicians, researchers, and book authors (*Staying Healthy Today Show*), it became evident that not only were these chronic diseases preventable, but many were also reversible through aggressive lifestyle practices.

Now, after hundreds of hours of not only writing and editing, but more research, multiple rewrites, and the hardest part, cutting down a wordy, disjointed 450-page manuscript in half, the book you are reading is the end result.

There is one additional and important aspect to the development of this book that is worth mentioning. In a way, this is

a type of autobiography about me: your basic middle-aged male who is right in the middle of that time when men get chronic diseases and are also very busy with a lot of self-inflicted pressure and self-worth issues—a prescription for health problems.

In hindsight, there are several reasons why I didn't start writing this book twenty-five years ago. But one became evident after I had received my first unsolicited AARP mailing as I approached fifty (now fifty-four). The reason the timing wasn't right to create this book in my twenties or thirties was that I personally needed to be practicing these *Staying Healthy* principles for several decades in order to see and feel clearly their effects on my own life before sharing them confidently and passionately with the world.

It has become abundantly clear to me, all the scientific research aside, that living my very physically active lifestyle with a whole-food, plant-strong diet, along with my acceptable but not great attempts at stress reduction, are paying off. I firmly believe that had I not been led to nutrition and preventive medicine as a profession and had not lived this lifestyle, I would be in serious trouble with my health right now. That is why I know to the core of my being that the information in this book really works.

The timing for me to write this book is perfect—for my own life, because of my experiences and where the world is now with the epidemic of chronic disease, rapid industrialization, and the expanding aging population.

I promise you that if you work at these *Staying Healthy* principles consistently, good things will happen to enhance your vitality, slow your aging process, and reduce your risk of chronic disease.

Acknowledgments

I am in deep gratitude to my family, especially my daughter, Mya; my three siblings, Jock, Denise, and Theresa; and my aunt Amber, for understanding my “absence” as I have pursued this vision.

To my co-workers at Health Associates Medical Group of more than twenty-five years for putting up with my restlessness, changing schedules, and moods as I followed my dream—especially my boss, friend, and supervising physician, Michael J. Kwiker, DO.

To all the wonderful clinicians and researchers who have inspired me, taught me, and given me creative ideas on the big picture of nutritional and preventive medicine, especially Jeffrey Bland, PhD; Alan Gaby, MD; and Jonathan Wright, MD.

To Raj Chopra Sr. of Tishcon Corporation for keeping *Clinical Pearls* and the *Expert Interviews* alive, as they are a great service and a significant part of my life’s work.

To Galen Miler, Gerardo Perez, and Michael Desmond, my closest friends, business confidants, and most importantly people who really believed in me when I was struggling to believe in myself.

To my former wife and close friend, Karen Rae Hamilton, who put up with the *Clinical Pearls* years, and to this day is one of my greatest supporters.

To Lynn Boro, my dear friend and spiritual adviser, for guiding me along my path of self-fulfillment.

To the editors of this book, Courtney Arnold, Jodi Brandon, Renee Johnson, and Stephanie Killen. Taking my information-dense, over-detailed writing and putting it into a comprehensible format that a real person could read is a significant accomplishment and very much appreciated.

To Stephanie Killen, senior editor and designer at *Integrative Ink*, for guiding me step by step through the last phases of putting this book together.

To Gwyn Snider of GKS Creative for getting this book print-ready.

To Mark Pitzele of Book Printing Revolution for providing me the last minute resources to complete this book.

To Konstantin Koryaka for last minute graphics and formatting changes.

I want to thank the following current book authors, clinicians, and researchers who have created a vision for a practical and viable healthcare model that can not only *slow and prevent chronic disease but also actually reverse it*, while at the same time preserving the ecology of the planet as a whole. James W. Anderson, MD; Neal D. Barnard, MD; Dan Buettner; T. Colin Campbell, PhD; Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., MD; Rip Esselstyn; Richard M. Fleming, MD; Joel Fuhrman, MD; David J.A. Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc; Daphne Miller, MD; Dean Ornish, MD; John Robbins; Paul and Barbara Stitt; Makoto Suzuki, MD; Bradley J. Willcox, MD; and D. Craig Willcox, PhD.

To Hodan Farah Wells, PhD, and Jean Buzby, PhD, from the USDA's Economic Research Service for helping me with the graphs showing the U.S. dietary consumption patterns over the last century.

To Dr. David J.A. Jenkins for taking time out of his very busy schedule to write the Foreword for this book.

Lastly, and most importantly, I am so deeply grateful to you, Mom and Dad, for inspiring me to try and do good, work hard, and never give up. I wish you were here...and you are!

Introduction

When I am in a grocery store and see a stressed-out parent dragging an overweight or obese child with one hand and pushing a shopping cart full of empty-calorie, sweet-fat foods with the other, I feel deeply saddened. When I flip on the television to watch the Olympic Games, symbol of humankind's greatest physical potential, and see commercials advertising high-calorie fast food from major U.S. corporations, I shake my head. And when I look at a group of overweight adults, and now children, and recognize the obvious risk factors for vascular disease, diabetes, and other *dangerous yet avoidable* chronic diseases, I am motivated to make a difference.

Being an expert in any field means that sometimes you see things the average person cannot. In my case, I need only look at a person's outward physical state and observe the things they are doing in order to predict what degenerative diseases they have or will eventually develop. I am a physician assistant who has been practicing primary care, nutrition, and integrative medicine since 1983. I know that lifestyle habits and actions have a one-to-one correlation with how we look and feel and what diseases we get.

Sometimes, when I see how much people are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally from unnecessary illness, I want to just grab them and say, "This doesn't have to happen! You can change this! It is easier than you think! These common diseases are not inevitable!"

I want to show them the evidence that the degenerative diseases we, as a culture, have come to accept as part of the aging process do not have to exist to anywhere near the degree that they do in today's modern society. Or better yet, have them read about the lifestyle habits of successfully aging populations from around

the world who are living functional and meaningful lives into their eighties, nineties, and one hundreds with minimal chronic disease. For those of you who say, “It’s their lucky genes!”—no, it’s not! Their children, grandchildren, and relatives who adopt the modern, Western lifestyle get these chronic diseases as soon as they start living this lifestyle, either by immigrating to the West or as the Western lifestyle comes to them due to globalization. Same genes, different lifestyle—opposite and devastating results!

We all have the power to create health and wellness right now. The best part about all of this is that it isn’t even difficult—at least not the know-how. The major chronic diseases of developed countries (heart disease; diabetes; stroke; bone loss; arthritis; aging eye disorders such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts; aging neurological disorders such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s; and most cancers) are largely preventable, are sometimes reversible, or can, at the very least, be significantly delayed or diminished in severity by practicing what I call the *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health*. It is that simple! I will show you these nine simple steps that are guaranteed to improve your health if you apply them daily and consistently!

My Challenge to You

I am going to challenge you on every page in this book to take the healthcare reform debate out of the hands of the politicians and take charge of creating your own healthcare insurance or security. If we all practiced these *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health* we could save billions of dollars as a country, be so much more productive work-wise, and be more present to our families and loved ones. Collectively we could focus our energies and talents on solving the world’s difficult problems. The first step is to educate yourself with understandable, credible, and practical health information. That is my commitment to you: to provide health information that is non-hyped, factual, and usable in the *busy, modern world*. The second step is to stop blaming others for your present health situation. Stop blaming big pharmaceutical companies, the

fast- and processed-food industries, health insurance companies, your employer, corporate agribusiness, the “hospital-industrial complex,” and, yes, good old Uncle Sam. The third step is to take daily action and practice these health principles consistently and with intention.

Personal Responsibility: The Key to Being Healthy

Yes, government officials could obviously be less wasteful, more efficient and accountable, and not give subsidies to make unhealthy food cheaper, and on and on. But the truth is you can take the issue out of their hands *immediately* by living these simple lifestyle practices right *now*! The last time I ate a meal, Uncle Sam didn’t grab my fork and stick it in a fat, juicy steak or grab a piece of pizza and stuff it into my mouth. The last time I turned on the TV, Uncle Sam didn’t chain me to my couch so I couldn’t use the exercise or treadmill during my favorite show. Uncle Sam didn’t make me take the escalator versus the steps or park as close as possible when I go shopping so that I would not have to walk farther... *Are you catching my drift?* You are in charge of all of that! Quit blaming the government—or anyone else—for your health! Make simple, good choices about what you put into your mouth every time you eat and commit to moving every day, and our current healthcare crisis will become a non-issue. We will become more productive as a nation, and you will have more time and money to be you. Those industries that don’t have our real health interests at heart will have no power. If we stay well, insurance companies, big pharma, and factory medicine have no muscle. If daily, we make the right whole-food choices and exercise, not only do we stay healthy, but agribusiness and the fast-food industries will then have to change or die. It could happen literally overnight with the simple daily choices we make to feed ourselves.

The onus is on you once you educate yourself and understand some basic principles. Once you are knowledgeable, you are the conductor of your healthcare journey. Once you understand and really believe that there are cultures and individuals who have mini-

mal chronic disease, you will begin to see the fundamental lifestyle practices that allow them to achieve this state of health. Once you understand, by simply looking at the figures in this book, how the modern diet and lifestyle have changed over the last fifty to one hundred years, setting the stage for these diseases, then the practicing of these *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health* is a “no-brainer.”

Disease Care vs. Preventive Care

You might ask, “If it is so obvious, Kirk, why isn’t everybody already doing these things and experiencing health and vitality even into old age?” There are several reasons, but one main reason is that *our healthcare model is focused on disease treatment, not on prevention*. This is a backward model that can only lead to more chronic disease, more suffering, and more unnecessary medical expenditures. We financially reward people to let disease happen and then treat it. We don’t compensate people and professionals for preventing these chronic diseases in the first place. We don’t give economic incentives for patients to stay well or to businesses to keep their employees well. Insurance companies have no incentive to encourage prevention of disease if they keep raising premiums to treat more chronic diseases and we (individuals, businesses, and government) keep paying the premiums. So with our current healthcare model, unless the “pain” is great enough or the country goes bankrupt, it can’t and won’t lead to necessary change.

I must say, though, that as a society, we may be approaching the pain threshold that will make us act. My hope is that your “pain” and openness to learn will lead you to look at, try to understand, and most importantly begin practicing these *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health*, or what I call the **TRIAD Wellness Program**.

Who Is This Book For?

When I began to write this book, I imagined that I would be talking to you, the individual reader, as I would one of my patients.

At the beginning, I figured that I would just put the final sections of this book down on paper in the shortest, most succinct manner possible so that you could get started right away applying these simple principles to achieve immediate results. I still very much want that for you. Yet for many people, a deeper understanding is important because it puts a reason behind the recommendations.

Many people jump on and off healthful practices because they don't really understand how health works; they are very frustrated and looking for a "quick fix" that never really works in the long run. I strongly believe that if you understand why we are unhealthy as individuals, a country, and now the world, and understand the "how to" of these *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health*, you will be able to stay on a positive, health-promoting lifestyle. The truth is that good health is much simpler than investing in the stock market, running a business, or being a working mother with three children. Good health is simple, not rocket science. You will experience an immediate return if you just keep practicing these principles 80 to 90 percent of the time.

Citizenship and Health: What's the Connection?

To me it is important for each American to take care of his or her own health. If we as a country followed the **TRIAD Wellness** approach using the *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health*, it would save our country billions of dollars and greatly enhance worksite productivity, helping our economy and increasing our ability to compete in the global marketplace. Having a healthy workforce and a strong economy can only enhance our security as a nation. Good health is a goal each American should have. *Being healthy is being patriotic.*

Leading the World to Good Health

With this example of positively changing the health of the United States, and thereby improving our economy, work productiv-

ity, quality of life, and environment, we (the United States) can be the world leader we should be. In this free market system full of positive, health-promoting entrepreneurship, in conjunction with “lean” government, we can show other countries how to help their own people be healthy and productive and reduce this needless toll of suffering and cost that comes from chronic diseases related to the modern lifestyle. The message in this book is not just meant for the individual or even for my own country; it is meant for the whole world.

Staying Healthy in the *Fast Lane*: “You Can Do It!”

My mother was a wonderful and inspiring woman. Even in the days before she passed, she never lost her positive spirit or her will to succeed. One of my favorite memories of her is huffing and puffing, attached to her oxygen tubing and using her walker as she slowly crossed my dance floor, cheering herself on. “You can do it, Del,” she would say. “You can do it!”

My message to you is that **“You can do it!”** The time is *now* to change the way we practice medicine and the way we maintain our own health. The nutrition and exercise data are there; the examples of successfully aging cultures living with minimal chronic disease are there. All that is left is for us to just do it! I know you can! Come join me!

Part I:

The Problem

Chapter 1

URBANIZATION, THE MODERN LIFESTYLE, AND CHRONIC DISEASE

What's the Problem?

Chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis, bone loss, and degenerative neurologic and ocular diseases are increasing worldwide as the world urbanizes. These chronic conditions account for 70 percent of all deaths in the United States and 60 percent of all deaths worldwide.¹ In the United States, 75 percent of the healthcare budget is used to treat chronic diseases.² These diseases result in enormous healthcare costs, loss of work productivity, and human suffering. These chronic conditions can be significantly reduced, their progression slowed, and some virtually eliminated by lifestyle changes involving diet, increased physical activity, and positive mental conditioning. Pharmaceutical approaches can only treat symptoms but do not correct the underlying causes of these conditions. In addition, adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are among the top-ten leading causes of death in the United States.³

Why so Much Chronic Disease?

As countries urbanize (move from an agrarian lifestyle to cities) and as manufacturing, transportation, and marketing improve, more processed foods, which are high in caloric density and low in nutrient density, are consumed. This is why the world has seen an

increase in “empty” calorie consumption, even in countries where food shortages exist. Also, individuals in urban areas are generally less physically active and have a more chronically stressful lifestyle.

Individual calorie availability has increased between four and five hundred calories per day in the United States over the last century.⁴ Between 1970 and 2008, calorie intake has increased from 2,168 to 2,673 calories per day (a 505-calorie increase).⁵

It takes 3,500 calories to equal a pound. Therefore, we have been consuming almost a pound extra in calories per week over the last forty years. This is why the United States has an epidemic of overweight issues and associated diseases.

The major reasons for this calorie increase in the United States come from **five major dietary changes and patterns over the last century** (see illustrations at end of chapter 1):

1. A continued increase in total **meat** consumption, with red meat consumption decreasing and poultry consumption increasing.⁶
2. A dramatic increase in added **fats and oils** to foodstuffs.⁷
3. A continued, steady increase in **calorie sweeteners**, more so from corn sweeteners now than the cane and beet sugars of the past.⁸
4. A dramatic increase in **cheese** consumption.⁹
5. An increase in **grains** since the early 1970s, of which 85 percent are **refined grains**, with “sweet-fat” calories added. (Note: Though grain consumption is higher today than the 1970s, total grain consumption in the early 1900s was greater than it is today, with four to five hundred fewer total calories per day consumed.)¹⁰

Since the 1960s, when family farms began to disappear in the United States, industries that made the components for these high-calorie, processed foods had government subsidies (processed cereal grains, soybeans, livestock, etc.), while fruit and vegetable industries in general have not. Thus fruit and vegetable prices have increased by about 50 percent from 1982 to 2008, with much less marketing of their health benefits to the public. The other

food components of the processed food industry that added extra calories and reduced protective micronutrients to our foods have actually had a reduction in real costs. Adjusted for inflation, prices decreased by 10 percent for fats and oils, 15 percent for sugars and sweets, and 34 percent for carbonated soft drinks.¹¹ Therefore, the public consumes more calories and unhealthy foods because of price, convenience, and lack of knowledge. Do you ever wonder why fast food can be sold for such cheap prices?

The culmination of these five dietary patterns over the last century has led to an unhealthy and devastating food intake pattern in the United States, in which 12 percent of the calorie intake is from plant foods (up to half of which may be processed), 25 percent animal foods (almost all of which is factory farmed, not free-range drug-free animals), and 63 percent processed foods containing added fats, oils, sugars, and refined grains.¹²

U.S. FOOD CONSUMPTION AS A % OF CALORIES

PLANT FOOD:

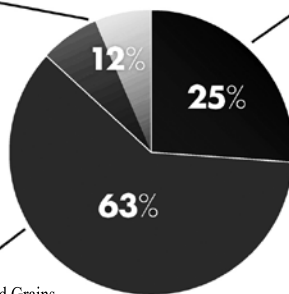
Vegetables, Fruits, Legumes,
Nuts & Seeds, Whole Grains

Fiber is found only in plant foods.

NOTE: Up to half of this category may be processed. The focus should be on whole unprocessed vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds, and whole grains.

PROCESSED FOOD:

Added Fats & Oils, Sugars, Refined Grains



ANIMAL FOOD:

Meat, Dairy, Eggs, Fish Seafood

Cholesterol is found only in animal foods. Animal foods are the **PRIMARY** source of saturated fat.

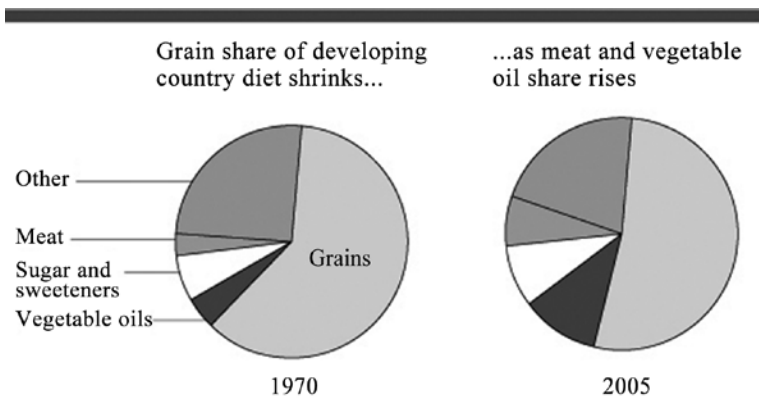
GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING:

Eat **LESS** from the animal and processed food groups and **MORE** whole foods from the plant food group.

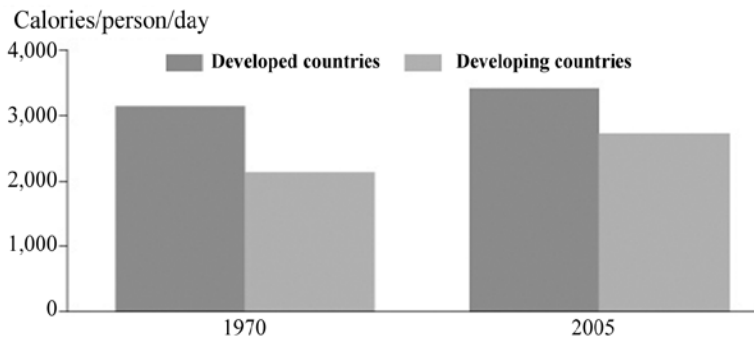
In general, food from the animal and processed food group contribute to disease, while **WHOLE** foods from the plant group contribute to good health.

Special thanks to Joel Fuhrman, MD, and Amie Hamlin, Executive Director of The New York Coalition for Healthy School Food for permission to reproduce and modify this illustration. Original concept by Joel Fuhrman, MD, in *Eat to Live* (Drfuhrman.com). Graphic design by Michelle Bando (Michellebando.com) as seen at Healthyschoolfood.org/nutrition101.htm, copyright 2009.

Worldwide per capita calorie availability has increased in developing countries since the 1970s, occurring concurrently with increased consumption of meats and animal foods; increased added fats and oils; increased added calorie sweeteners; a mild increase in grain consumption with a decrease in the overall share of grain consumed compared to other foodstuffs; and, a reduction in physical activity. Consequently, chronic diseases are occurring in developing countries at alarming rates as their traditional diets change to more urbanized or “Westernized” diets and daily physical activity is reduced, similar to developed countries.¹³



Calorie availability is increasing in developing countries



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Obesity and overweight conditions, derived from modern-day excess calorie consumption and lack of physical activity, lead to many of these chronic conditions. A reduction in excess calorie consumption with an increase in nutrient-dense foods would lead to weight normalization and significantly reduce the incidence of many chronic diseases. This would dramatically reduce healthcare costs and human suffering, while increasing work productivity. Nutrient-dense foods have many health promoting compounds (antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, fiber, etc.) that are protective against chronic disease progression and can help reverse some of these conditions.

The Simple Solution: The TRIAD Wellness Program

The solution to the modern urbanized lifestyle and ensuing chronic disease is the same for developed and developing countries: practicing simple diet and lifestyle principles, which successful aging populations from around the world have practiced for hundreds of years as part of their normal way of living. While the culture and location of these aging populations is different, the essence of their basic lifestyles is very similar and is generally included in the *9 Simple Steps to Optimal Health* using the **TRIAD Wellness Program**.

For Who and When

The **TRIAD Wellness Program** can be practically applied to the individual, the family, your community, your country, and the world.

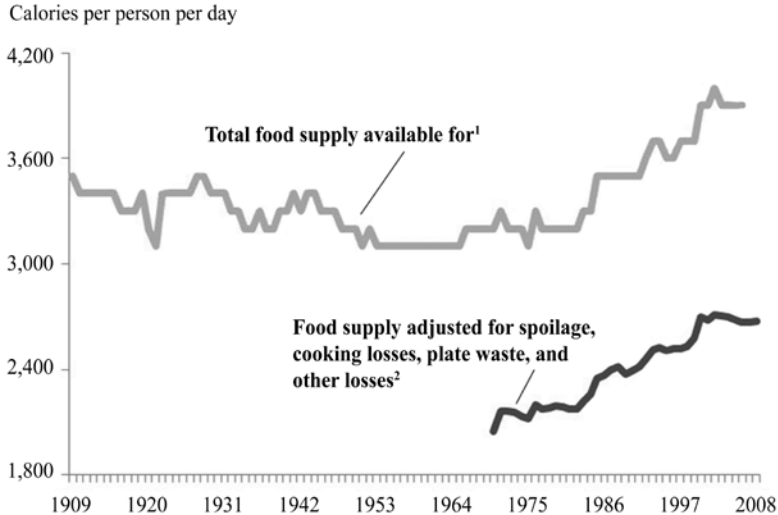
Now is the time for this approach because:

- Healthcare in the United States and around the world needs **real reform** from the current disease-care models to prevention-oriented models.
- The current science supports the *Staying Healthy in the Fast Lane* concepts.

- Examples of healthy aging cultures support this approach to healthful living and aging.
- Individuals have used this approach in very busy lifestyles and have maintained a high level of wellness and function.
- The world is busy, aging, and urbanizing rapidly, so it is imperative to implement simple principles and practices that everyone can employ to reduce ever-escalating healthcare costs, loss of work productivity and function, and human suffering that occur from chronic diseases. If we can prevent and reverse chronic disease as individuals and a world community, then we can focus on the pressing and complex world problems that need our attention now.

Changing Food Consumption Patterns in the United States Over the Last Century

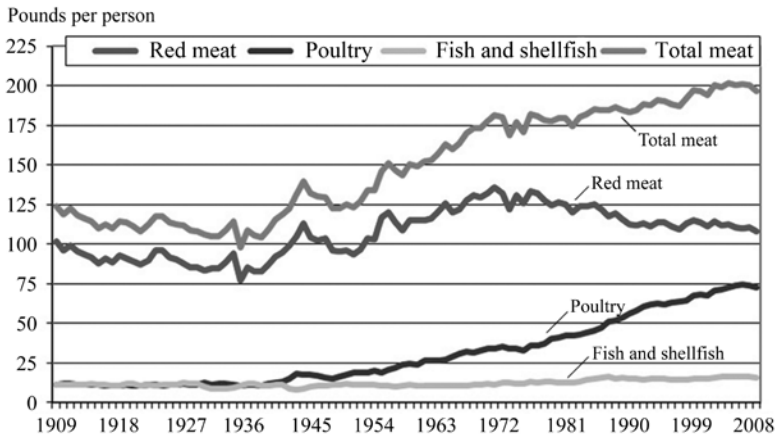
Calorie Availability and Consumption Patterns Over The Last 100 Years



¹Source: USDA, Centers for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Nutrient Content of the Food Supply Data based on USDA, Economic Research Service's Food Availability Data. Rounded to the nearest hundred.

²Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Loss-Adjusted Food Availability Data.

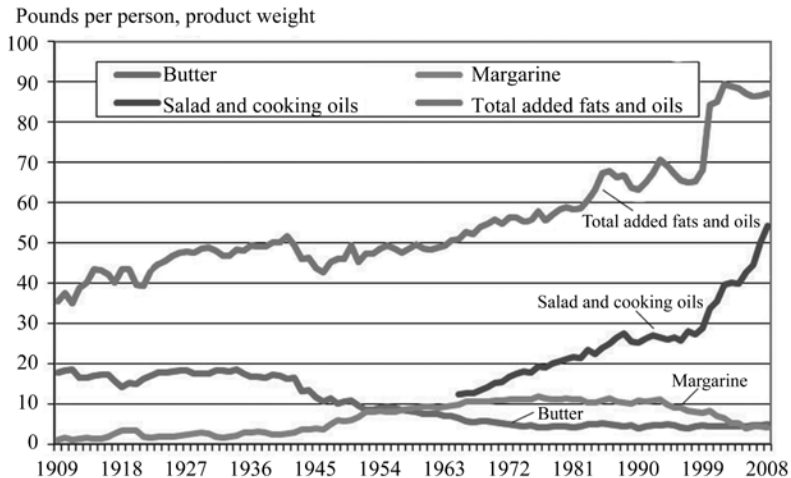
Meat Consumption Patterns In The United States Over The Last 100 Years



Boneless, trimmed (edible) weight equivalent.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Availability Data.

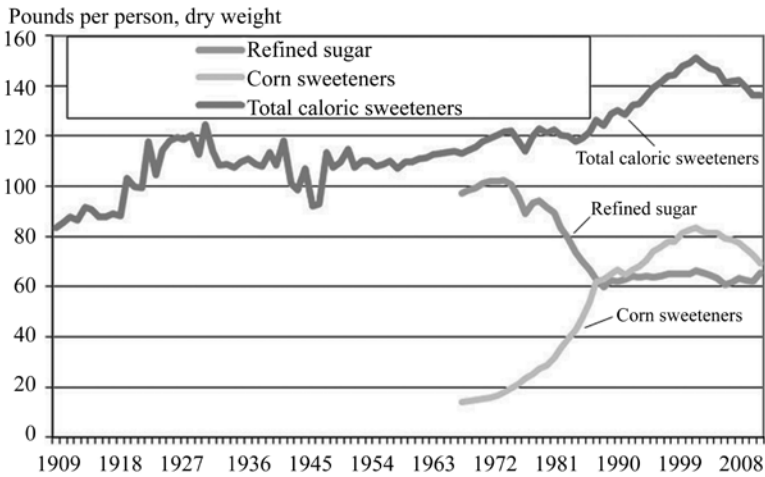
Fats and Oil Consumption Patterns in the United States Over The Last 100 Years



Note: In 2000, the number of firms reporting vegetable oil production increased.

Source: USDA/Economic Research Service estimate using data from Census Bureau.

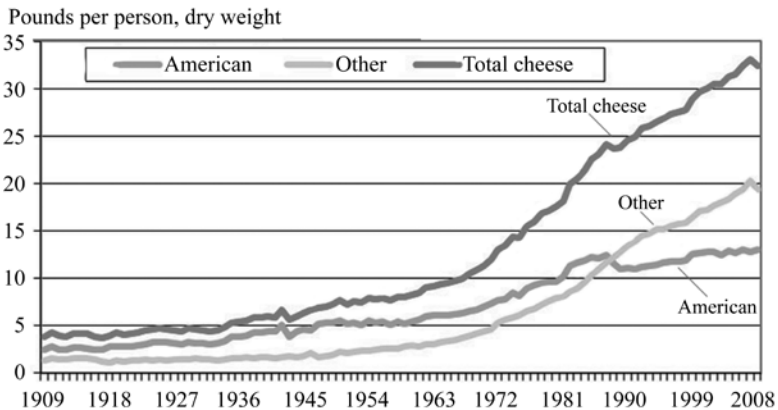
Calorie Sweetener Consumption Patterns in the United States Over The Last 100 Years



Total caloric sweeteners include refined sugar; corn sweeteners, honey, and other edible syrups.

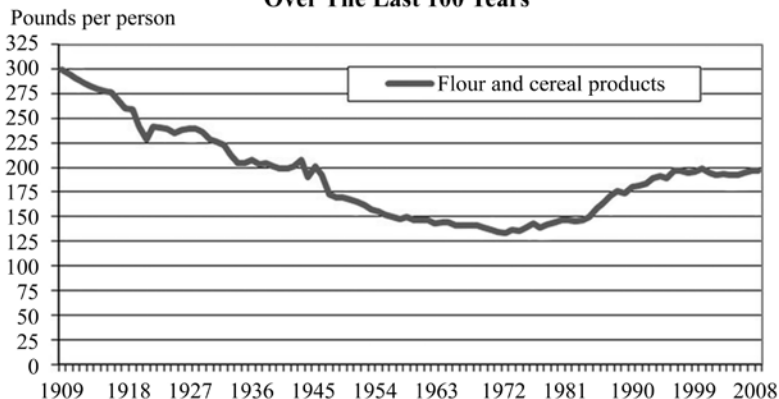
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Availability Data.

Cheese Consumption Patterns in the United States Over The Last 100 Years



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Availability Data.

Flour and Cereal Product Consumption Patterns in the United States Over The Last 100 Years

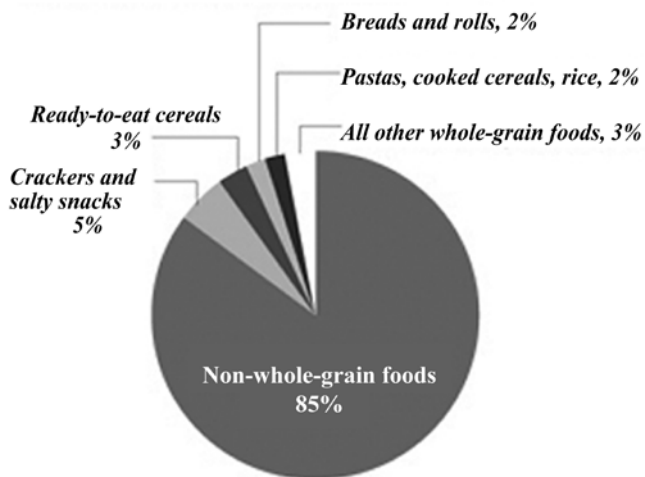


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Availability Data.

The six above U.S. dietary pattern illustrations were created with the assistance from: Hodan Farah Wells, PhD, economist, Economic Research Service, USDA, hfarah@ers.usda.gov; and Jean Buzby, PhD, agricultural economist with the Economic Research Service, USDA, jbzby@ers.usda.gov. Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Availability Data.

How Americans Consume Their Grains

Americans eat their whole grains as:



Source: ERS analysis of 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data.

U.S. FOOD CONSUMPTION AS A % OF CALORIES

PLANT FOOD:

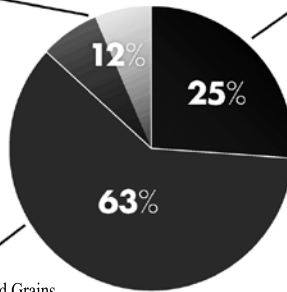
Vegetables, Fruits, Legumes,
Nuts & Seeds, Whole Grains

Fiber is found only in plant foods.

NOTE: Up to half of this category may be processed. The focus should be on whole unprocessed vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds, and whole grains.

PROCESSED FOOD:

Added Fats & Oils, Sugars, Refined Grains



ANIMAL FOOD:

Meat, Dairy, Eggs, Fish Seafood

Cholesterol is found only in animal foods. Animal foods are the **PRIMARY** source of saturated fat.

GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING:

Eat **LESS** from the animal and processed food groups and **MORE** whole foods from the plant food group.

In general, food from the animal and processed food group contribute to disease, while **WHOLE** foods from the plant group contribute to good health.

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Chapter 2

THE AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Every day my patients tell me that their health and well-being are out of synch with the pace of modern life. Chances are that you, too, share some of their complaints. Think of the last time you told yourself or someone else:

- “I don’t have time to exercise.”
- “It’s too expensive and takes too long to prepare healthy foods.”
- “I am too tired to cook; we have to eat out!”
- “There is no time left to take care of me after my family.”
- “If I had known getting old was like this, I would have taken better care of myself.”
- “These golden years aren’t so golden.”

It’s true that our fast-paced existence has a strong and often negative impact on our health and that we would all feel much better if we could somehow just slow down. It’s also true that healthcare costs are skyrocketing and that families and communities across the nation are suffering under a financial burden that will only get worse as the baby boomers move into old age. The *Age Wave*, as visionary psychologist and gerontologist Dr. Ken Dychtwald so aptly calls it, is reaching tsunami proportions and will change the face of healthcare and our economy as the boomers demand more services for the epidemic of chronic diseases with which they will have to live.¹

The fact is that society isn't likely to change any time soon. If we want to beat the exhaustion-chronic disease cycle, then we as individuals need to find a way to take charge and stay healthy in this rapidly paced modern world. If we want to avoid the crippling costs of twenty-first-century medical care, then we must be willing to honestly assess the choices we are making in our everyday lives and start taking our health into our own hands today. If we do this, we will achieve real and lasting healthcare reform.

Sobering Facts

In John Robbins' must-read book *Healthy at 100* (2007), a few sentences put our present societal health predicament into focus:

*"A century ago, the average adult in Western nations spent only 1 percent of his or her life in a morbid or ill state, but today's average modern adult spends more than 10 percent of his or her life sick...Throughout the industrialized world, people are living longer but they are getting sick sooner, so the number of years they spend chronically ill is actually increasing in both directions."*²

This next excerpt from *Healthy at 100* made me do a double take since my siblings and I had recently taken care of our mother with chronic, life-ending pulmonary fibrosis. "...the average twenty-first-century American will likely spend more years caring for parents than for children."³ My siblings and I had more than adequate resources and a great family unit to take care of my mother and keep her at home, but it was hard and time consuming. I can't imagine other families with fewer resources, or individuals with no family at all, and what kind of care they might receive.

These facts, and my experience with my mother and seeing patients and families over the years, drive me to stay as healthy as I can so I can remain independent as I age and not be a burden to my daughter and society.

The Big Problem: Chronic Diseases

As mentioned in Chapter 1, chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, chronic lung, kidney and liver diseases, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, and diabetes account for 70 percent of all deaths in the United States.⁴ These diseases are predominantly caused—and can be prevented—by diet and lifestyle choices. So how have we come to the extreme state of widespread ill health that we are experiencing today?

In 1970, the average adult consumed five hundred fewer calories per day and weighed 19.8 pounds less than in 2000. Similarly, a child in 1970 consumed 350 calories less per day and weighed 8.8 pounds less than in 2000. The numbers don't lie. They perfectly predict our obesity epidemic.⁵

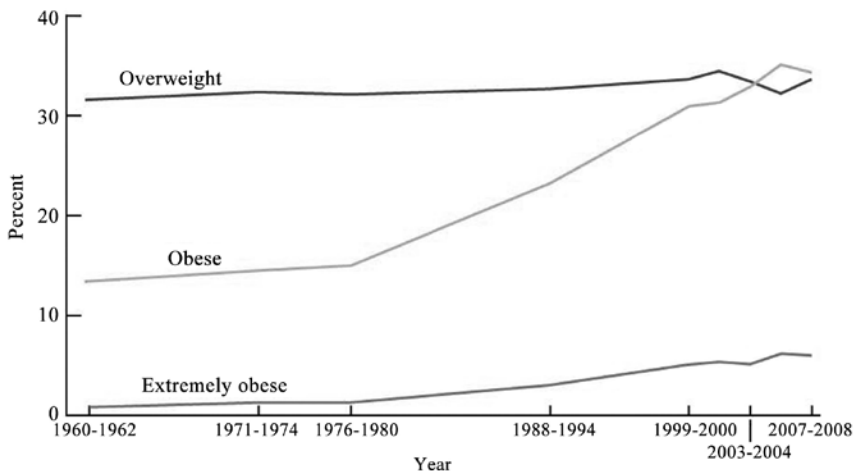
Being Overweight: The Proverbial Elephant in the Room

It is very easy to see when one looks back over the last century in the United States why being overweight, obesity, and inflammatory diseases are becoming more prevalent. The answers are simple: As modern society urbanizes and people's lives center around cities, people become busier; more processed, high-calorie, and prepared foods are made available; and people eat out more frequently.

American households spend more than 40 percent of their total food budget on foods prepared outside of the home, up from 25 percent in 1970.⁶ This is problematic because, when we eat at restaurants and fast-food restaurants, we not only consume more food, but we also eat foods with higher caloric density (i.e., added fats and oils, calorie sweeteners, cheeses, meats, refined grains). Furthermore, even the foods we eat at home now tend to be more calorie dense and less nutritionally dense than they were even a few decades ago. For the average person, eating one meal away from home each week equals approximately a two-pound weight gain each year.⁷

These trends, along with a marked decrease in physical activity, can lead to only one thing: increased weight—and lots of it. The good news is that after a quarter-century of increases, obesity prevalence has not measurably increased in the past few years. The bad news is that obesity levels are still high: 34 percent of U.S. adults aged twenty and over. There is a greater percentage of Americans overweight than obese (34.2 percent vs. 33.8 percent). In addition, we now have a new weight category—the extremely obese (> 40 BMI) at 5.7 percent of the population (overweight > 25 BMI; obese > 30 BMI).⁸ If you add these totals up, over 70 percent of the U.S. population has an excess weight problem!

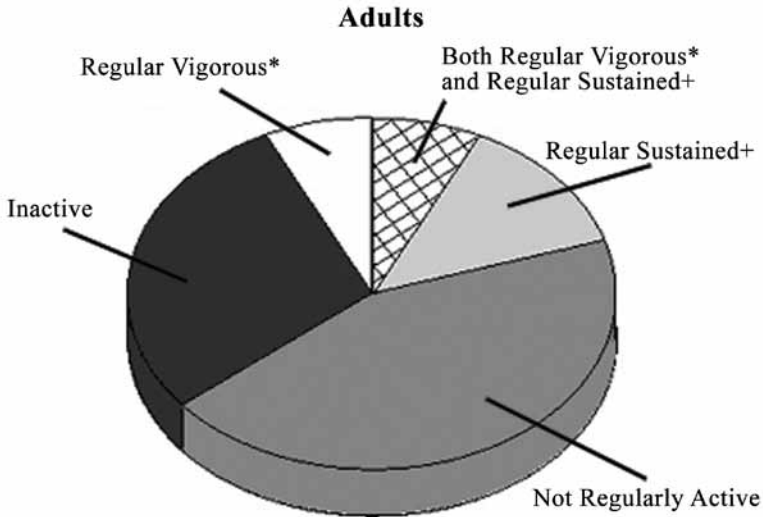
Trends in Overweight, Obesity, and Extreme Obesity Among Adults Aged 20-74 Years: United States, 1960-2008



NOTE: Age-adjusted by the direct method to the year 2000 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, using the age groups 20-39, 40-59, and 60-74 years. Pregnant females were excluded. Overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or greater but less than 30; obesity is a BMI greater than or equal to 30; extreme obesity is a BMI greater than or equal to 40.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Examination Survey cycle I (1960-1962); National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey I (1971-1974), II (1976-1980), and III (1988-1994), 1999-2000, 2001-2002, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and 2007-2008.

Cynthia Ogden and Margaret Carroll, *Prevalence of Overweight, Obesity, and Extreme Obesity Among Adults: United States, Trends 1976-1980 Through 2007-2008*. Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



*Regular Vigorous - 20 minutes 3 times per week of vigorous intensity

+Regular Sustained - 30 minutes 5 times per week of any intensity

SOURCE: CDC 1992 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey.

Physical Activity and Health: A Report From the Surgeon General. Adults. Facts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Being overweight and obesity increase the risks for the following diseases in adults:⁹

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver and gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)
- Gynecological problems (abnormal menses, infertility)

The Threat to our Children

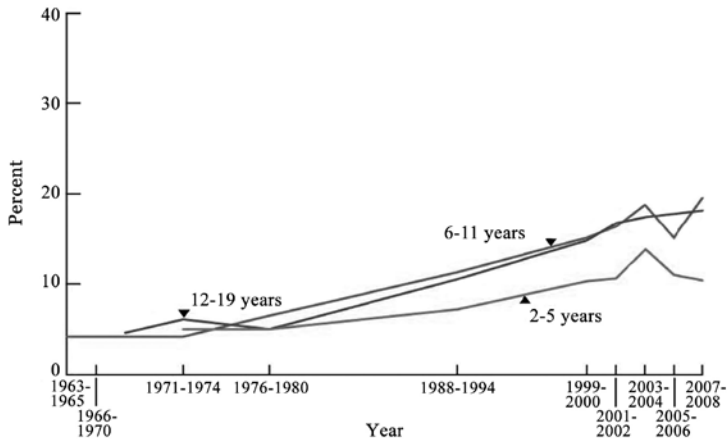
Our youth are also experiencing an epidemic of obesity and overweight issues. In total, there has been a tripling of the obesity rate in children since the 1970s. In the age groups of six- to eleven- and twelve- to nineteen-year-olds there has been almost a quadrupling of the obesity rates since the mid-1960s.¹⁰

These startling obesity and overweight rates, in conjunction with reduced physical activity, explain the even more alarming trends we are starting to recognize, such as an increasing prevalence of type 2 diabetes—a disease of adults—in our youth. And that's just diabetes. The big picture is that the overweight epidemic is putting our youth in the position to develop the same chronic diseases that plague our adult population. The only difference is that they will be getting these diseases at an earlier age than we have ever seen and with more severe consequences. That means living with these diseases longer and costing us a lot more in time, money, and reduced function and productivity.¹¹ This is the first time ever in American history that children may have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.¹²

Why Have Overweight Issues Dramatically Risen in our Young Children and Teens?

The reasons are pretty much common sense. For one thing, children eat like their parents, who are getting fatter, not thinner. Also, parents are busier, which means less oversight, less patience, less energy, and more dietary shortcuts and junk foods eaten in or out of the house. The calorie-dense processed foods that are available to adults are also available to kids. In addition to the excess calorie exposure that occurs with their parents, kids today are not getting enough physical activity. They spend more time engaging in sedentary technology-based entertainment. Children today are more stressed out than ever before (just like their parents).

**Trends in Obesity Among Children and Adolescents:
United States, 1963-2008**

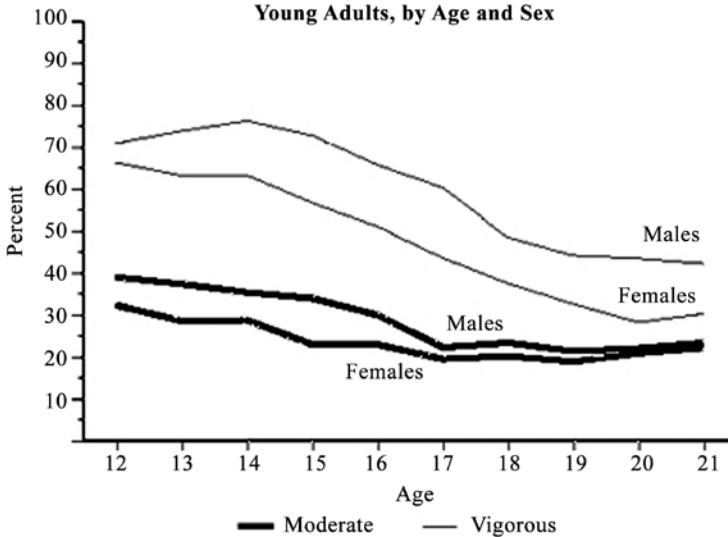


NOTE: Obesity is defined as body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to sex- and age-specific 95th percentile from the 2000 CDC Growth Charts.

SOURCES: CDC/NCHS, National Examination Surveys II (ages 6-11), III (ages 12-17), and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) I-III, and NHANES 1999-2000, 2001-2002, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and 2007-2008.

Cynthia Ogden and Margaret Carroll, *Prevalence of Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, Trends 1963-1965 Through 2007-2008*. Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Physical Activity Levels of Adolescents and
Young Adults, by Age and Sex**



SOURCE: CDC 1992 National Health Interview Survey Youth Risk Behavior Survey *Physical Activity Levels of Adolescents and Young Adults, by Age and Sex. Physical Activity and Health: A Report From The Surgeon General*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Our Diet and Lifestyle Cause Inflammation

We are not only consuming excess calories but also a diet that promotes inflammation and leads to all chronic *inflammatory* diseases. This means that the foods we eat—and the portions and combinations in which we eat them—are causing our bodies to exist in a constant state of inflammation that leads to the symptoms and diseases from which we suffer needlessly. The changes that negatively impact our health and well-being are not random or mysterious. They can be traced directly to changes in lifestyles—specifically diet and physical activity choices we have adopted over the course of the last fifty to one hundred years.

These critical U.S. lifestyle changes over the *last century* mentioned in Chapter 1 are worth repeating. They include:

- An increase in total meat consumption¹³
- A dramatic increase in added fats and oils¹⁴
- Increases in calorie sweeteners (sugar from beet or cane and high fructose corn sweeteners)¹⁵
- A dramatic increase in cheese consumption¹⁶
- A decrease in total cereal grains and increase in refined grains¹⁷
- Reduced physical activity¹⁸

We simply reverse these diet and lifestyle patterns and we dramatically improve America's health (and prosperity!). At the same time we make these changes, we will create real healthcare reform and this current political debate regarding healthcare becomes non-existent.

Does an Anti-inflammatory Diet and Lifestyle Exist?

We have a problem with chronic diseases that are caused by inflammation. Inflammation is a natural response to stress, infection, injury, and trauma and is a needed response. If inflammation

is chronically activated, it leads to a continued release of chemical compounds by the body originally meant to be of short duration that can cause chronic tissue damage and the aforementioned diseases.¹⁹ Excess calories, chronically high blood sugars, low nutrient-dense diets, overweight conditions, and sedentary lifestyles all increase inflammation. We need to reverse these conditions on a daily basis to reverse or slow chronic disease problems. We need to create an anti-inflammatory lifestyle.²⁰

Key components of an anti-inflammatory lifestyle, which we will discuss in detail in the “How To” of the **TRIAD Wellness Program**, are:

- Eating *whole unprocessed* foods, especially plant foods, with or without small amounts of foods from animal origin
- Eating lots of *nutrient-dense* unprocessed plant foods
- Avoiding foods to which we are sensitive
- Controlling blood sugar (and insulin)—eating *low glycemic* foods
- Staying *lean*
- Getting daily *physical activity*
- Reducing and/or blending with chronic *stress*

The Bottom Line

Chronic inflammatory diseases plague Western industrialized societies and are now becoming prevalent in developing countries, straining economies and workforces and taxing the health-care budgets of the world community.²¹ Food is the major cause of inflammation. Chronic inflammation causes chronic diseases. Change the types of foods you eat and you can reverse inflammation and chronic diseases individually, locally, nationally, and worldwide. When I collectively look at medical studies, successfully aging cultures, and years of experiencing diseases improved by diet change, it is easy for me to say that “*food is the most powerful medicine there is!*” Two other important causes of inflammation

in the modern lifestyle are lack of physical activity and chronically activated mental stress.

Before we get to the “how” of changing this negative health direction, I think it is important to address this next question: Is it just crazy, stressed-out Americans who are struggling with these health issues of chronic disease, or is the rest of the world struggling with these issues as well?