

## Your Health and the Financial Crisis

The past several months have brought on a number of financial worries for many people in our community. The stress of these worries can unfortunately promote nutrient loss and systemic inflammation in the body. Because avoiding the mental stressors of the recent economic crunch is not likely to be easy, it is critical to address the areas of health that we do have control over: proper exercise, and diet. Maintaining these two aspects aids the body by reducing inflammation thus aiding in the prevention of a number of chronic diseases. Additionally, maintaining diet and exercise helps the body deal with mental stressors more effectively.

### The High Cost of Bad Diets:

The average American diet is relatively cheap in direct cost but expensive in indirect costs. Most people consume diets high in calories, low in fiber, and low in nutrients. As a matter of fact, 80 percent of the calories consumed by Americans come from refined sugars, flour products, oils, and fatty meats. It is common knowledge that this type of diet promotes inflammation and promotes a host of diseases to flourish (heart disease, cancer, obesity, IBS, etc). Heart disease and cancer are the most common causes of death in the U.S. Therefore it could easily be said that the multi trillion dollar/year health care bill in this country is greatly contributed to by unhealthy processed diets. One of the best ways to save money in the long run is purchasing foods that do not have other added ingredients:

**1. Lean meats** – always consider the source of the meat. For example, fish should be wild caught, beef should be grass fed, and chicken should be free

range. Studies have shown that the fat content of grass fed and wild animals is more favorable than grain fed farm raised animals.

**2. Fresh vegetables and fruits** – It is best to buy organic because they have greater nutrient density and do not give exposure to as many harsh chemicals. It is best to buy them when they are in season.

The most common argument I hear about healthy eating is that it is too expensive. Eating is a lot like financial investing. The payoff is not always immediately noticeable. Invest in healthy foods for yourself today so that you can maintain your health as you age. The average US adult is on 4-5 medications. The average cost of a prescription medication is about \$55 for a month's supply. That's \$220- \$275 per month per person. For a family of two that's \$5280 per year. If eating right prevents you from needing just one medication, you can save \$13,200 over a 20 year period, and that is only the fiscal analysis on medication. What about hospital stays, doctor visits, surgeries, etc? There is no dollar amount worth a loss in function or quality of life.

### Confusing Marketing- Don't Get Confused:

When trying to make healthy decisions about healthy eating, deceptively creative marketing can cloud the issue. For example; the cereal industry markets a variety of sugar loaded processed cereals and other breakfast products as health foods. A number of these marketing tactics are pointed at our children, but one in particular is aimed at adults with high cholesterol. This commonly advertised

“O” shaped cereal claims to be a valuable staple food for those with high cholesterol. What is not disclosed in the advertisement is that 6 of the top 7 ingredients in this product are all forms of processed sugar. Unfortunately, high sugar intake has been associated with causing cholesterol elevations, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and a number of other chronic diseases. A number of labeling terms have emerged in the marketing world to make “healthy” claims on labels: fat free, low fat, 0 Trans fat, etc. Remember, when reading labels, it is not the claim on the front of the package that is important. It is the ingredients on the back of the package that should be given the most attention. Some general rules to live by when buying packaged food items:

**1.** Typically, if the package has more than three ingredients, then the product is most likely overly processed and not health promoting no matter what the label claims say.

**2.** If any of the ingredients cannot be pronounced without practice then the food should be avoided.

### Common Sense Applies:

There is no magic secret. If you want to save thousands of dollars in health care costs, you can. Treat your body the way God intended you to. Avoid processed foods. They are not healthy. They add to your life time health care bill. They reduce your lifespan. They reduce the quality of your life. Consider the quality of your food the same way you consider the quality of a major purchase (home, car, etc). The following are free: exercise, sunshine, and sleep. Take the time for each on a daily basis and your “health” bank account will grow and flourish.

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