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NUTRITION AWARENESS

Nourishment Through Knowledge

With an abundance of food choices and marketing messages, it's easy to feel overwhelmed when trying to make nutrition decisions. Understanding food labels and adopting mindful eating habits can help you make informed choices and foster a healthier relationship with food, empowering you to take control of your health and nutrition.

Understanding Food Labels: Decoding the Information

Food labels provide valuable information about what you're consuming, so learning how to read and interpret them is essential for understanding what you're putting into your body. Here are some tips to help you decode them:

- **Nutrition Facts Panel:** Check the serving size and number of servings per container, calories, macronutrients (fat, carbs, protein), and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals).
- **Ingredients List:** Ingredients are listed by weight, so the first few items make up the bulk of the product. Choose products with whole, recognizable ingredients and avoid those with long lists of artificial additives or preservatives.
- **Daily Value (%DV):** Use %DV to gauge nutrient levels in one serving relative to your daily needs. Aim for 20% or more for beneficial nutrients like fiber and vitamins, and 5% or less for nutrients to limit, like sodium.
- **Marketing Claims:** Be cautious of terms like "low-fat," "natural," or "sugar free," as these can be misleading. For example, "low-fat" products may contain added sugars to enhance the flavor.

Mindful Eating: Cultivating a Healthy Relationship with Food

Mindful eating is the practice of being fully present and aware during meals. It encourages you to focus on the experience of eating, your body's hunger and fullness cues, and the nutritional value of your food. Here are several ways to incorporate mindful eating into your daily routine:

- **Eat Without Distractions:** Distractions, like scrolling through your phone or watching TV, can lead to overeating and reduced satisfaction. Instead, eat without interruptions so you can savor each bite.
- **Listen to Your Body:** Pay attention to your body's hunger and fullness signals to help prevent overeating and promote a healthier relationship with food.
- **Slow Down:** Eating slowly allows your brain to register fullness and enhances your appreciation of flavors and textures.
- **Choose Nutrient-Dense Foods:** Mindful eating isn't just about how you eat but also what you eat. Opt for whole foods that provide essential nutrients and support overall health and well-being.

Nutrition awareness is key to a healthier lifestyle. Combining food label knowledge with mindful eating offers benefits such as improved nutrient intake, better weight management, enhanced digestion, reduced stress and emotional balance, and can help lower your risk for chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. By implementing these nutrition awareness tools you can make choices that support your health goals. Start today, and remember that small changes lead to big results!