



TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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March is National Nutrition Month, Practice Sound Nutrition for Lifelong Health

By Lt. Col. Will Wheeler, Tripler Army Medical Center

A fad can be defined as a fashion that becomes popular in a culture relatively quickly yet loses popularity dramatically over time. In my youth I thought pet rocks, long hair, and a brand of shirt whose trademark was a logo displaying two feet were things that would be around forever. It was not to be. Two went the way of many fads while my long hair was victim to a barber during basic training. What does all of this have to do with practicing sound food choices for lifelong health? Well March is National Nutrition Month[®] and this year's theme is "100% Fad Free." Although some fads may end up as just topics of conversation in later years, diet fads can hinder us or prevent us from achieving our overall fitness goals. The American Dietetic Association website



Tripler Army Medical Center's Anuenue Café Salad Bar is a site to behold, and nutritious too.

times (in various forms) since it was first introduced in 1825.

(www.eatright.org) lists some fad diets from the past that may sound funny today but at one time were the craze. One promoted chewing food 32 times before swallowing, another promoted cabbage soup, and of course there is the low carbohydrate diet that has popped up numerous

Rather than list the common attributes of a fad diet, I would like to focus on what seems to stand the test of time and may guide us all towards habits that will help us be as healthy as we can be. The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) was developed to identify and investigate the characteristics of individuals who have succeeded at long-term weight loss. These individuals have practiced habits that have helped them keep the weight off. Their daily practices can help all of us. What all of these individuals had in common was a diet that can be characterized as low in calories, low in fat and high in carbohydrates. They also ate several times throughout the day, monitored their body weight and exercised regularly.

A good resource for assessing your diet in comparison to sound diet practices is the Food Guide Pyramid at www.mypyramid.gov. The recommendations based on gender, age and activity level give most of us prudent guidelines on the number of servings we should consume from each of the food groups daily. Each food group also comes with suggestions on choosing foods to keep the calories and fat low, and the carbohydrates at recommended levels.

The participants averaged 4.9 meals or snacks per day. Skipping meals or going long periods of time without eating is not beneficial whether you want to lose weight or maintain your weight. It takes



Anuenue Café prepares nutritious Soup and Salad daily for Tripler staff and beneficiaries.

planning but the benefits of several small feedings throughout the day are better for cognitive and physical performance. Having fresh fruit and vegetables on hand is well worth the effort.

Self-monitoring of your fitness goals allows you to see where you are at and what may or may not be working. The majority of people in the NWCR monitored body weight. That's a good thing to do but you may also want to keep track of the number of times you exercise per week, the number of fruit and vegetables you consume per day or how many glasses of water you consume. Once you set a goal you'll want to be able to assess how well you are doing.

As for exercise, 91 percent of the individuals surveyed engaged in regular activity. For many that meant exercising one hour per day. Recommendations will vary based on your goals but consistency and choosing something that you enjoy are the keys to any exercise program.

I hope the above recommendations are helpful although you may never find them on the cover of a magazine where fads are commonly found. I believe they will continue to prove themselves over time. As for me, I haven't missed my pet rock, I am happy with the shirts I have now, and my hair will only grow long in some places on my head but my commitment to healthy eating and regular exercise remains strong. Enjoy National Nutrition Month[®], "100% Fad Free!"

(Wheeler is a registered dietitian and the chief of the Nutrition Division at Tripler Army Medical Center.)