

Malnourished!...Even After Eating a Full Plate. Shocking!

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By Warren Matthews

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This is a concept that you may have difficulty in accepting. Nonetheless it is one that I have been preaching' for years and has now been confirmed by studies showing people in the US, Canada and the UK are amongst the most malnourished in the world. This is the case in spite of obesity reaching epidemic proportions in the US. Malnourishment is without doubt a leading factor in a wide variety of health problems including cancers.

Does this mean that overweight people are eating all the food to the detriment of the rest of the population? Not at all! In fact, obese people figure prominently amongst those people who are malnourished.

I can sense you thinking... "That's a crazy statement". After all, when you think of someone being malnourished your mind flashes to pictures which you have seen on TV of starving children in Africa.

How can an overweight person be malnourished?

Much easier than you think... please read on and I will explain.

The Problem is in the Food!

A recent analysis of a range of staple foods in Canada including potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, apples, onion, broccoli etc, was commissioned by The Globe and Mail and CTV news.

The results were predictable to some and a shock to others. Let's

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use potatoes as an example. This is what the analysis found:

Over the last 50 years the potato has lost:

- * 100% of its Vitamin A

- * 57% of its Vitamin C and iron.

- * 28% of its Calcium.

- * 50% of its riboflavin

- * 18% of its thiamine

Of the seven nutrients analyzed only niacin levels had increased. The results were similar for all the 25 fruits and vegetables tested. One of the worst results was from broccoli in which ALL nutrients had declined measurably including niacin with Calcium down 63%.

The Globe and Mail and CTV used comparative figures from government researchers for the years 1951, 1972 and 1999. These earlier figures had been published in various scientific journals in the UK including the British Food journal. Release of this data in the US has been limited to a few alternative health journals.

Tim Lang a professor at the centre for Food Policy in England says as a further example of how our food has been degraded is that you would now have to eat eight oranges today to get the same amount of Vitamin A that your grandparents got from eating just one orange.

Do foods that have low nutritional values play a part in obesity?

Absolutely! I believe this is a major factor in the current epidemic of obesity. If you are lacking in essential nutrients it will have a serious flow-on effect in your body. First of all you will never really feel well', you will lack energy which means you exercise less, and you will have a tendency to seek out comfort' foods which generally contain sugars and thus the cycle continues and it gets worse and worse and ultimately ends up in obesity and ill health.

What can be done about this problem?

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* Try to eat organic fruit and vegetables wherever possible.

* Avoid processed foods! If you think the loss of nutrient value in fresh fruit and vegetables is bad enough, I can assure you that it is nothing compared to the nutritional emptiness of processed foods... and to add insult to injury they are full of trans fats due to the hydrogenated processing methods that are used.

* Take a QUALITY multi NUTRIENT supplement. A multi vitamin/mineral tablet is not adequate for a number of reasons. The prime one is that most multi vitamin' supplements use synthetic ingredients with both questionable efficacy and bio-availability and they lack other important nutrients. Unfortunately this is an area in which many

consumers are being misled. It's a complex subject and as such I may devote a newsletter to this very important subject in the not to distant future.

It was interesting to see that even some mainstream physicians are beginning to recognize this problem as evidenced by a recent article in JAMA which advocated people take quality supplements for preventative measures.

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Mt. Matthews is the Editor of 'Xtend-Your-Life', published bi-monthly and offers tips to help you take control of your health. Subscription details at...<http://HealthyBody.Xtend-Life.com>

Savoring Moments Through Mindful Eating

By Deva Ratnakara

We all eat. But how mindful are we of every bite we take?

Your mother always told you to slow down and taste your food. That's great advice, especially when

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we find ourselves grabbing a quick snack on the run or eating a meal while driving. How we eat says as much about us as what we choose to eat.

We can learn a great deal by paying attention to our eating habits. Our appetites change depending on our moods. If we're depressed, we may eat more than usual or we may lose our appetite completely. When we are consumed by an emotion such as anger or sadness, we may not be aware of our eating habits at all.

Paying attention to the way you eat is a great way to develop a more mindful approach to life in general. Since eating is something we do several times a day, it's a perfect activity to pair with mindfulness. If you can choose to eat a meal alone—at work or at home—you have a perfect opportunity to create greater awareness at the same time.

Ready to give it a try?

Sit in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed for several minutes. Taking the time to present your food in an appealing way may be helpful for this exercise. At the very least, unwrap your food and discard any packaging.

If possible, take a look at the food before you put it on a plate. Spend a moment focusing on the food itself—the colors, textures, and aromas. Consider the nutrients in the food, and focus on what it will do for your body.

Now, shift your attention to your empty plate. This is the vessel that will hold the food you choose to put into your body. Notice the shape, the size and the color of the plate. Take a moment to consider the space that the food will fill on this plate.

Next, spend a moment concentrating on your body. Look at your belly. Feel your hunger. Pay attention to your craving, your anticipation of the flavors, and the way they will taste on your tongue.

As you serve the food and place it on your plate, be mindful of the fact that this will be nourishing your body. Whatever you choose to place on your plate will ultimately serve as fuel for your activities and contribute to your energy and wellness.

Now, take a bite of the food you have served yourself. Chew slowly, and pay attention to the flavor and texture of this bite. Feel the food sliding down your throat, and consider how it will be digested by your system to create energy for your body. With each bite, notice the sensation of chewing and swallowing. Savor the taste. Swallow completely before taking another bite. As you take the last bite, pay attention

to the fullness in your belly, and note the satisfaction of completing a mindful meal.

Try eating mindfully during one meal a day for a week. For your regular, faster meals, notice when you find yourself eating without paying attention. Intentionally slow down so that you can enjoy that one bite before speeding up again. Doing this regularly will give you a much better understanding of what you are feeding your body—and how.

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By becoming more mindful of our eating, we learn to pay attention to what feeds us, both literally and figuratively. Our food choices affect our wellness, and our approach to eating spills over into the way we handle our work, our relationships, and our lives in general. We must learn to recognize patterns in our behavior in order to create more awareness and harmony.

Mindlessly chewing whatever we fork into our mouths is akin to ignoring our actions in general. With a few moments of daily mindful eating, you will develop a much greater awareness of your choices and their power over all aspects of your life.

Deva Ratnakara has been teaching mindfulness and yoga for more than twenty years. He lives in Sri Lanka where he is the head of a 500-member meditation group. To learn about his retreat in February 2005, please visit

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