

The Peace Diet

for the whole family

This is a gradual approach to gently shifting your family to a very natural whole-foods diet, in **5 easy steps** that will not shock your loved ones, your budget, or your time constraints.

Why do it?

Many families have health concerns that have not responded to general attempts to eat a balanced diet, and/or have not responded to medical therapy as well as they have needed. Extensive anecdotal (word-of-mouth) reports suggest that health can be improved overall by adopting a very natural whole-foods diet - one which is very different from the "standard American diet" most of us grew up with, yet which is similar to the way most people eat, over most of the world.

Some of the health conditions that people have partially (or greatly) improved with a very natural whole-foods diet approach include:

- Overweight and obesity (along with sleep apnea, joint pain, ovarian problems, etc.)
- Metabolic syndrome (high blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol)
- Diabetes and 'pre-diabetes'
- Gut issues, including irritable bowel syndrome and gastric reflux
- Fatty liver disease and fatty-liver hepatitis
- Allergy-related issues (like asthma, eczema, celiac disease, and food sensitivities)
- Autoimmune problems (like rheumatoid arthritis, gout, Crohn's/ulcerative colitis, psoriasis, etc.)
- Poorly defined "invisible illnesses," like fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue
- ADHD, learning disorders, autism spectrum disorders, behavioral disorders

A very natural whole-foods diet conforms to rule number one in medicine: "First, do no harm." It is a way of eating that is healthy for the whole family. And family members can continue to follow their medical treatment plans at the same time.

How to get started?

Try taking one step every few weeks or months, depending on what you and your family are able to tolerate, and what your needs are.

- For example, if you have a very hectic, stressed, chaotic life, you may not be able to take a new step very quickly until you are really used to the old step.
- On the other hand, if you have family members who are struggling, you may need to move through the steps as quickly as you are able.

As with any life change, the main difficulty with each new step is *discipline*. If you are taking steps slowly, you won't need as much discipline - you will simply get used to each new structure. However, if your family needs to move through the steps more quickly, then you will need more self-discipline, and you'll need to be ready to help others with theirs.

Is it affordable?

Yes! A very natural whole-foods diet is less expensive than the "standard American diet." It is cheaper to buy five pounds of potatoes than to buy a bag of frozen tater tots, or to buy a pound of rolled oats instead of a box of cheerios, or to buy a bag of apples instead of a carton of ice cream or a box of fruit roll-ups.

Is it time consuming?

Yes - sort of. Many of us are accustomed to preparing meals very quickly, using some pre-prepared foods for at least some of our meals every day. This creates the illusion that cooking "from scratch" is a hassle. However, one gets used to planning ahead and budgeting time, the old-fashioned way that busy working families do all over the world. This guide is intended to ease the adjustment.

Disclaimer: I do not presume that you are starting from the "ground floor," dear reader! Most people feel that they *already* eat a very healthy diet. However, if your family is having trouble with health or behavioral problems that have led you to read this, then you probably have room for improvement. The goal of this plan is to make those improvements relatively painless - even though they may be quite significant. I do suggest you **read through all the steps carefully** - even though you may feel that some parts don't apply to your personal situation.

Step 1:
Eat at home.

Don't buy "fast" food ever - even "healthy" fast food - and don't go to restaurants unless absolutely necessary (example: stove is broken, you are out of town, etc.) - rarely at most. If you often go to restaurants because you are bored and need a change of venue, consider picnics (indoor or outdoor) and dinner parties (or breakfast parties) involving home made food.

In a restaurant, you are unable to control or even detect what's in the food, and businesses are frequently obliged to cut corners in ways that may ultimately be less nutritious - or even hazardous - even though delicious.

Take or send lunches to school or work. Don't eat cafeteria food, and avoid vending machines and snack shops. Even if you might lose some money by no longer getting free lunches at school or work, you will probably save money by not going to restaurants (as well as on future health costs).

How to do it: Plan ahead.

- Pick a *shopping day* - one day every week when you will go to the grocery store(s).
- Start by making a *menu list* that includes a suggestion for each meal. Include breakfasts, lunches, snacks and treats - not just suppers. Save your menu lists! Over the months, you can re-use them.
- Now make your shopping list: the list of ingredients needed for these meals.
- At the store, follow your list.
- When you get home, post your menu list in the kitchen, so you can remember what to make.

A note about lunches:

- You will need containers (paper bags, plastic spoons, reusable water bottles, etc.).
- It's okay to send the same thing over and over. If they're hungry, they'll eat it, same as you would.
- Be prepared for your family members to trade or discard some (or all) of their lunches in protest. Just be patient. Remember, if they get hungry, they will eat it.

***Remember, you can stay at this step as long as you want, until you are in the habit of it,
unless your family needs to move along more quickly.***



Step 2:
Buy zero processed or "junk-food" treats.

These include:

Drinks: soda (sugar or sugar free), energy drinks, Gatorade, Koolade, sweet tea, bottled sweetened herb tea, chocolate/flavored milks, coffee drinks and hot chocolate mix, chocolate syrup, etc.

Sweets: cookies, granola bars, crackerjack, grahams, candy, fruit roll-ups, gummies, instant pudding, cake and brownie mixes, etc.

Frozen snacks: ice cream, popsicles, hot pockets, frozen burritos, mini-pizzas, etc.

Salty snacks: potato chips, corn chips, bagel chips, crackers, rice cakes, pork rinds, jerky, microwave popcorn, etc.

- This step may eliminate *half* of all the empty calories, artificial colors and flavors, and preservatives in your family's life. However, it doesn't involve a lot of extra work, because snacks by definition are a minor part of your day.
- This does not mean you never have another soda pop or candy bar! You just won't have them in your *house*. Consider them as treats when you're out of the house, no more than once or twice a month.
- Remember, if you don't buy it at the store and bring it home, then they won't eat it.

How to do it: Have replacements. Here are some examples:

Frozen sweets:

homemade juice popsicles
blender smoothies
frozen fruit +/- spoonful of yogurt (e.g. strawberries, blueberries)
homemade fruit ices (easy to make without special equipment)
homemade ice cream, if you have an ice-cream maker (natural ingredients)

Cold sweets:

fresh fruit or fresh-fruit salad
yogurt with honey and cinnamon
old-fashioned pudding (chocolate, butterscotch, etc.)
rice pudding, tapioca pudding, bread pudding

Cold and crunchy snacks:

carrot and celery sticks, radishes, peapods ("crudites") - dip in homemade salad dressing
homemade refrigerator pickles
apple slices +/- nut butter

Salty snacks:

homemade flavored popcorn
homemade microwave popcorn
buttered toast, peanut butter toast
homemade flavored nuts

Cold drinks:

icewater +/- fresh lemon or orange slice
fruit juice (may dilute with water or herb tea)
vegetable juices
cold or iced herb tea +/- honey (4-6 teabags or 1/4 -1/3 cup loose herbs + 1 large Tb honey per quart jar)
natural gatorade (3 c water + 1/3 c honey or sugar + 1/2 tsp salt + 1/2 c orange or lemon juice)

Hot drinks:

herb tea (hot or cold) with honey if sweetener is needed
hot cocoa from scratch
homemade coffee drinks with milk and spices (not from a mix unless you make it yourself)
homemade chai (sweet spiced tea with milk - not from a mix unless you make it yourself)

Baked goods:

homemade cookies, cakes, and brownies:
use dried fruit, cocoa powder, nuts, and spices, instead of candies and frostings
homemade candy - peanut butter fudge, truffles, etc.
homemade caramel corn and granola bars

Remember, you can stay at this step as long as you want, until you are in the habit of it, unless your family needs to move along more quickly.



Step 3:

Meals from scratch.

This is a bigger step than Step 2, because meals are usually a lot more important than snacks.

Zero pre-prepared/processed meals, or parts of meals, including:

Breakfast: no cold cereal/granola, pastry/muffins, flavored bagels/flavored cream cheeses, pre-flavored yogurts, frozen sausage-egg biscuits, frozen pancakes/waffles, pancake/baking mix, etc.
Lunch: no premade packaged soups, salads, deli foods, lunchables, noodle cups, frozen microwave meals/ pockets/ burritos, etc.
Supper: no boxes or bags ("helpers," mac and cheese, instant rices), cans (soup, stew, chili in a can), jars (spaghetti and other sauces), frozen meals (pizza, tv/microwave dinners, pockets), etc.

How to do it:

- You will need recipes, to make the meals you like from scratch. You can get armloads of cookbooks at the Public Library; photocopy or handwrite recipes you like.
- Recipes will also help you make your menu and shopping lists (Step 1).
- This is a good time to acquire some labor-saving devices you might not already have - for example, a crock pot, rice cooker, pressure cooker (for beans), food processor, bread machine, etc.

A word about breakfast:

- Replace cold cereal with hot cereal (oatmeal and others).
- Granola is cheap and easy to make at home - you can do it in big batches once a month.
- Add your own flavorings to yogurt, cream cheese, etc., instead of buying pre-flavored.
- Blender smoothies are fast to make and drink, are healthy, and don't make a mess (the blender jar and glasses rinse clean).

Ways to save time:

- Make your own mixes - for example, muffin/ cornbread/ pancake/ brownie mix, using dry ingredients and powdered milk in individual-recipe plastic bags. Label them carefully, so you'll know what ingredients must be added. You can also do this with coffee drink and chai mixes.
- Make double recipes of soups, stews, sauces (like spaghetti and pizza sauce), etc. Freeze half to use in the future.

Important note: you don't need to be a purist! The quality of your meals and snacks, cooked from scratch, will already be so high, that if you can't afford to buy all fancy organic fresh foodstuffs, you won't have to worry about it. For example - it's fine to use frozen vegetables rather than fresh, to use canned beans instead of cooking dried beans, and to buy ordinary meats, dairy, and eggs, rather than organically grown.



Step 4:

Part-time whole-foods vegan.

In this step, the very structure of meals may change, on a part-time basis.

If your family regards a "real" meal as consisting of "meat and two veg," they might not know what to make of this new model. Eventually, every other supper will have no meat, poultry, fish, cheese, or egg at all. Although this might sound unnecessarily radical at first, there are two important reasons to take this step:

First, it reduces the overall amount of animal food you eat. Why does this matter?

- Less meat/dairy means much *lower calories* - and a little less protein. Most of us eat more protein than our bodies need, and the excess gets stored as fat.
- Less meat/dairy generally means *lower fat and sodium*, reducing the lipid and blood pressure issues involved in obesity and the metabolic syndrome.
- Less meat/dairy means less consumption overall of "exciting" strongly-flavored foods, *reducing cravings* for more and more sugar, fat, and salt to maintain that sense of "excitement."
- It also reduces your family's consumption of environmental contaminants like mercury and PCBs, infectious agents like Salmonella, E.Coli, and "Mad Cow," and various inputs and additives (antibiotics, hormones, curing agents, preservatives, colors, etc.).

While it's true you could avoid many of these if you exclusively bought (or produced) organic animal products, this is too expensive for most of us. But by simply reducing animal foods, you can reduce your exposure while spending *less*. (Whole plant foods may contain trace farm inputs like fertilizers, weedkillers, and pesticides; however, they're not concentrated as they are in animal foods, and are usually easier to remove, by scrubbing and peeling.)

The second reason is that this step *increases* the overall amount of simple grains, beans, and fruits and vegetables you eat. Why does this matter?

- Plant foods - from almonds to zucchini - are loaded with vitamins, minerals, complex sugars, and soluble fiber sources that aren't as readily obtained from animal-based food ingredients.
- If they're as close to "whole" as possible (e.g., brown rice, whole baked potato, whole-wheat bread, etc.), then they are low-glycemic complex carbohydrates, which don't cause the exaggerated blood-sugar spikes that worsen metabolic problems. People with overweight and blood sugar problems don't have to restrict their eating, as they do with simple-carbohydrate processed foods.
- This step does not increase the overall bulk of your diet. You don't have to eat more food to get more nourishment. You are simply opening up more space for nutrient-dense plant foods, rather than piling them on top of the meat, poultry, dairy, eggs, and fish/seafood you already eat.

How to do it:

When you make your shopping lists, start planning **one night a week** of vegetarian, whole-food suppers.

- This does *not* mean that you replace a hamburger with a pre-packaged soy burger (although you can make your own whole-grain/bean burger mixture at home, of course).
- It also doesn't mean you just make macaroni and cheese.

Instead, focus on very simple menus that include a whole grains, beans, and several vegetables, either separately or mixed up together. Some examples:

Red beans and rice with greens, carrot sticks, and sliced tomatoes

Minestrone (Italian vegetable) soup with whole wheat bread and salad

Veggie tofu stir-fry (broccoli, carrots, snow peas, bell peppers) with brown rice

Black bean burritos (whole wheat tortillas, quick homemade salsa, and greens) with corn on the cob

You can consult some vegan cookbooks from the library, or adapt menus from vegetarian cookbooks, cutting out the cheese and eggs, where they appear.

Over time, increase the number of whole-food vegetarian suppers per week, until they occur **about every other night**.

Consider: if your family members eat 3 meals a day, that's about 20 meals per week. If 4 of those are whole-foods vegan meals, then only **20%** of your family's meals are this type. They'll notice the difference at first - especially, as I mentioned, if their idea of a "real" meal is meat-and-potatoes - but in the greater scheme of things, 20% isn't that radical a change!



Step 5:

Hypoallergenic diet.

Some people prefer to minimize the amount of foods they feel may cause sensitivity that affects health and behavior. These may include:

- "Artificial anything": *all* food additives, including added colors, flavors, and preservatives found in all foods, drinks, supplements, and medications (both prescription and over-the-counter remedies)
- Gluten (wheat protein)
- Casein and lactose (cow's milk protein and milk sugar)
- Egg products (primarily egg protein/albumin)
- "Nightshade"-family plants (tomato, peppers, potato, eggplant)
- Soy products, including soymilk, tofu, and "hydrolyzed protein" used as commercial meat filler
- Corn products, including corn syrup
- Peanuts and/or tree nuts

One way to test whether one or more of these foods may be causing problems is an *elimination diet* :

1. Stop *all* exposure to all of them (the ones you choose) for *at least 1 month*.
2. Then gradually add single foods back *one at a time, several weeks apart*.
3. If the person's symptoms return when a food is added back, then it is eliminated again, on a longer-term basis.
4. When the symptoms subside, a different food can be re-introduced, and so on.

An elimination diet is often the first step suggested, by health professionals and well-meaning bystanders, to determine any evidence of food sensitivities causing health or behavioral trouble, especially in children. People are often leery of attempting it, because it can involve a lot of hassle, expense, and unpleasant sacrifices. However, it may actually be pretty easy for a family that has already become accustomed to:

- Eating at home,
- Purchasing zero processed or "junk" foods,
- Making meals, and their ingredients, from scratch,
- And eating very simple whole-food vegan meals on a regular basis.

Many families will find that their bodies, minds, and spirits have improved significantly before they even get to this point, and for them an elimination diet may be unnecessary. You may find that the first 4 steps are sufficient to make a dramatic impact on your family's health and well-being.

Good luck!

Peace