6 things doctors want patients to know about better nutrition

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Nutrition is the foundation of good health, playing a crucial role in improving quality of life. Yet with the constant hustle of modern life, maintaining a balanced, healthy diet often takes a backseat. This increases risk for obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other health conditions.

Additionally, while GLP-1 receptor agonists marketed as Wegovy, Ozempic and Mounjaro can help with weight loss, that is not enough. It's important not to lose sight of the continued value of a high-quality diet.

That is why it is important to follow proper eating patterns that include nutritious foods and drinks. But with so much conflicting information about what constitutes such a diet, it can be challenging to know where to begin.

Here is a list drawn from the AMA's What Doctors Want Patients to Know™ series—which provides physicians with a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today's health care headlines—on how patients can make better nutrition decisions.

1 Make healthy food choices

What you eat plays a leading role in your health and well-being. When someone eats healthy, it helps to protect against many chronic diseases such as heart disease, prediabetes, type 2 diabetes and obesity. But with so many fad diets and food recommendations out there, it can be hard for patients to

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navigate what to eat and what not to eat. Two physicians took time to discuss what they want patients to know about healthy eating.

2 Cut intake of ultraprocessed foods

For people on the run, ultraprocessed food may become their go-to diet, sacrificing nutrition for convenience. The problem is that consuming ultraprocessed foods on a regular basis increases one's risk of cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, obesity and type 2 diabetes, among other things. But it can be hard to tell when these foods are on your plate. Two physicians took time to discuss what patients need to know about ultraprocessed foods and healthier steps to take.

3 Reduce sodium consumption

While sodium is an essential nutrient, most people consume too much and are not even aware they are doing so. The body needs a small amount of sodium to work properly, but in excess it can increase a person's risk for developing high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and stroke. That is why it is important to understand where most salt intake comes from and how to lower it. Learn more about sodium consumption and how to lower salt intake.

4 Know your caffeine limits

Many people can't imagine starting their day without a cup of coffee or tea. Caffeine has become the silent hero fueling our daily lives, helping people get through that afternoon slump. It can also have positive effects on alertness, cognitive function and athletic function. But as we indulge in our favorite caffeinated beverages, there are also some concerns about excessive consumption and potential health risks. Three physicians share what to know about caffeine.

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5 Limit alcoholic beverages

During the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, some people became their own bartenders and progressed into heavier drinking patterns to cope with anger, stress and anxiety. Here is what patients need to know about unhealthy alcohol use and how to break the cycle of comfort or binge drinking.

6 Take note of vitamins and supplements

While vitamins and nutritional or dietary supplements can be beneficial to your health, they can also involve health risks. Notably, the Food and Drug Administration does not have the authority to review dietary supplement products for safety and effectiveness before they are marketed. And with more than 90,000 different supplements on the market, it can be confusing to understand what is safe and what is not. Two physicians took time to discuss what doctors want patients to know about vitamins and nutritional supplements.

The AMA's Diabetes Prevention Guide supports physicians and health care organizations in defining and implementing evidence-based diabetes prevention strategies. This comprehensive and customized approach helps clinical practices and health care organizations identify patients with prediabetes and manage the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, including referring patients at risk to a National Diabetes Prevention Program lifestyle change program based on their individual needs.

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