

How Do You Define Healthy Eating?

By Jen Drane, RD

Do a little experiment... bear with me here.... take a look at your old photo albums. Not your kids' baby books... I'm talking the old ones. The ones where you are in elementary school or even early high school, maybe your parents' old albums too. Now, what stands out? NOT. ONE. OVERWEIGHT. PERSON. Now, I do not descend from a tribe of super models by any stretch of the imagination. And I'm not saying there wasn't an uncle or aunt who didn't love donuts, but, for the most part, most of us hovered in or around a healthy weight range.

So, what the heck happened? I know my parents weren't stressing out about carbs and gluten. I know we didn't wear fit bits. Protein shakes? Huh? If you grew up in a typical American family environment, your life consisted of: breakfast, school, lunch, sports and then home to eat dinner... TOGETHER. And that dinner was whatever your mom threw together with ingredients she had on hand. The oven was involved. There was some chopping of veg. Carbs were not scary. Bread usually made an appearance. Often, dessert was offered. And best of all, we were healthy and happy (for the most part.).

As a Nutrition Expert, (I use that term loosely given the ever-evolving guidelines that govern my practice.), I have spent years teaching people how to eat healthfully in order to evade disease and maximize their quality of life. I am also an amateur self-experimenter. I have tried all of the diets. I felt it was my duty to my clients so I would be able to empathize with their struggle. And I do understand that there are people with true need of Medical Nutrition Therapy. In truth, I could never maintain any of the faddish diets. I always came back to what and how I grew up eating. Here's what I know: calorie counting is annoying, everyone needs to eat some good fat, too much of anything is usually a bad idea. So, how do I define healthy eating? I say this:

1. Eat when you are hungry.
2. Get real about portion sizes.
3. Eat wholesome non-processed foods. If it comes in a box, bag or can, make sure there are less than five ingredients and that you can pronounce each one.
4. Add some color. (Produce, not Skittles.)
5. Move your body.
6. Connect with your people. Put the devices down. Turn off the boob tube. Pass the peas, please.