

Water, portion control keys to healthier diet
By Mike DeCinti

OK, now that you've quit smoking it's time to talk about your eating habits.

What's that? You're still smoking? That can't be right? You've been told over and over and over again about the dangers of smoking. You've learned that cigarettes contain tar, hydrogen cyanide and formaldehyde. That's right a substance used to pave the streets, a chemical used to kill rats, and a chemical used to preserve dead bodies.

Yummy!

It's common knowledge that it can lead to gum disease, heart disease, and cancer and causes more health problems and smoking-related illnesses claim more American lives than alcohol, car accidents, suicide, AIDS, homicide and illegal drugs combined.

Who wants a puff?

The truth is I know I'm not going to get you to stop smoking. I can't even get my mother to stop and I've been trying for almost 30 years. In fact the only thing that will probably stop her will, in fact, be her death. I obviously don't try and think about that, but statistics are not on her side, and it makes me sad everyday that she continues to ignore them.

But wait a minute; I forgot...this article isn't about smoking it's about eating right. Sorry about that, sometimes I get side-tracked, won't happen again.

STOP SMOKING! (last time...I promise)

Let's talk about eating healthy. Notice I didn't say diet. Diets don't work, that's why they're called fads. Remember Oprah wheeling out a wagon full of fat? Or Elvis in the 70's? He followed the "Sleeping Beauty Diet" in which he was heavily sedated for several days, hoping to wake up thinner. That's no crazier than the grapefruit diet or the "eat naked in front of the mirror" diet. Now that I think of it, Elvis may just have wanted to be sedated. But I digress. There will be no diets discussed here.

Instead make the choice to start eating healthier. Here are a few simple suggestions, tell me if they sound familiar.

- Drink lots of water. You should be drinking water like it's your job. The first thing you should do in the morning as soon as you get up, is to chug a cold glass of water. I'm not kidding. Your body went without water for 6 to 8 hours, you are dehydrated. It may be rough at first to get used to, but come on, it's water not clam juice. Drink it. Then continue to drink it all day long. Try to get a minimum of eight to ten 8oz glasses a day.

- Watch your portions. Have you noticed that portion sizes have become as obese as we have? I've seen people eat muffins the size of small dogs. You can have a muffin, but it needs to be smaller. A good size portion should be about the size of a deck of cards or your clinched fist.
- Eat less more often. Instead of the average of two to three large meals a day, you should be grazing on good food all day long. Try to eat five to six "smaller" meals every day. Spread them out 3 to 4 hours apart, try to include a lean protein, a healthy carbohydrate (yes, they exist) and a vegetable and remember portion control.
- There are plenty of websites that can give you sample menus and delicious recipes to make this transition to healthy eating a bit easier. I recommend www.eas.com. Don't be intimidated by all of the super athletes all over the place. Just follow the links to nutrition.
- Finally, some old standards that still hold true. Try to limit, if not eliminate your consumption of fried foods. Eat more fruits and vegetables, and whenever possible eat those vegetables raw. If you think it's bad for you, you're probably right. And remember, you can have that cookie or ice cream; just have it less often and eat less of it. Treat yourself to it as a reward for eating healthy all week, not as a substitute for dinner.

Ultimately, you have to make the decision to start eating healthier, and stick with it. As the saying goes you're the one that has to look at yourself in the mirror. I'm just hoping you'll be seeing less of yourself.