

THE VALUE OF VARIETY

The Wellness Brothers

“The best diets in the world are a good variety of clean, whole-foods, plant-strong, mostly raw, and in quantities that get you to the weight you want to be.” - TWB Diet Summary Sentence

In the previous article, this TWB Diet Summary Sentence was what we used to translate “What cells want” into a more practical “What to eat for optimal health and longevity.” The sentence contains 6 guidelines for making healthy food choices and in the coming articles we will work through each of them to ensure you know precisely how to use the TWB Diet Summary for achieving your health, weight, and performance goals.

In this article, we will focus on the first guideline: A GOOD VARIETY

FIRST THE FACTS

1. No single food contains everything that cells need
2. Every food has some sort of contaminant (something not needed or harmful)
3. Too much of even good foods can cause problems

Each of these three facts come into play when making a case for a good variety of foods in your diet.

First, knowing how extensive the need for nutrients is and mindful that no single food has it all, it's easy to see how a limited variety can lead to deficiencies. Not only that, but inadequate diversity can also lead to nutrient imbalances. Both deficiencies and imbalances are problematic.

Second, it's apparent that eating fewer foods in larger quantities can lead to toxicity. An example is a selenium poisoning from eating too many Brazil nuts. Even though selenium is such an important contributor to good health, too much of it can be harmful. The same is true for actual toxins, such as mercury found in salmon. When salmon is eaten more than three times a week, the risk for heavy metal toxicity increases. In cases like I've mentioned, it's better to eat a variety of nuts and different kinds of fish rather than the same ones repeatedly. Doing this not only reduces the possibility of toxicity but also increases the nutrient spectrum needed for better health.

Third, there is a link between increased allergies and intolerances with diets of reduced variety. Food sensitivities from excessive exposures are more common with dairy products, grains, eggs, and nuts, but can also develop with other foods. A greater variety of other foods and reduced quantities and frequency of the ones I just listed can reduce possible allergies and intolerances linked to over exposure to them.

Bottom line: Lower quantities and greater variety really are a win-win.

VARIETY FOR THE MIND

Beyond supporting the goal of the body with a good food variety, changing things up can also be good for the mind. It's fun to try different foods. This isn't true for everybody but, given the opportunity, most people are likely to enjoy greater diversity in their diet.

SO, HOW MUCH VARIETY IS RECOMMENDED?

The average person eats between 6 and 12 different foods a day. For those who eat mostly the same things repeatedly, it can mean as few as 15-18 different foods a week. That's not enough. Even if those are healthy foods, a wider variety is needed for optimal health. The idea is to aim at around 20-30 different foods a day and around 40-50 a week. Remember, fresh herbs, spices, and other condiments all contain nutrients the body needs. Teas and other drinks, like coconut water, also count. Knowing this makes the task of reaching those higher numbers easier.

To help you get your variety up there, here are a few pointers:

1. Increase the number of plants you eat:
 - a. Snack on 2-3 different fruits each day.
 - b. Try different salad mixes of 5-10 foods.
 - c. Experiment with natural dressing mixes.
2. Make smoothies with 3-8 ingredients. Change them up and have them as meals or snacks.
3. Mix things up with different herbs and spices. Add them to your meals and smoothies.
4. Make your own "trail Mix" by adding a bunch of different nuts and dried fruits together to snack on.

5. Get a good wholefood vitamin and mineral supplement and take it daily if you find it hard to eat a good variety of foods through the week. We recommend one called Optimal 2.

It would be interesting to know how many different foods you eat in a typical day. Being reminded of how important a good variety is in your diet, it's worth doing a check on your own eating habits. To get an idea of the kind of variety you eat, keep a diary for a week and see. You might be surprised by how regularly you eat the same things. If you find that to be true – remember that eating many different foods and rotating them through the week can reduce your risks of nutrient deficiencies, imbalances, toxicity, intolerances and allergies. It can also promote optimal health, which is not only an absence of disease. Chances are that eating a wider variety will even be more enjoyable for you, so get to work right away!

TAKE AWAY: A GOOD VARIETY OF FOODS IS WHERE A GREAT DIET BEGINS

[Core Direction](#) Article, written by Dr. Ryan Penny of [The Wellness Brothers](#)