



# Laser Treatment Center

*Tips, Advice & Information*

## **Dr. C's thoughts on a healthy diet**

by Dr. Cooperrider

There is so much diet advice around today that it is enough to make your eyes glaze over! As years have gone by the advice keeps changing, so that what was thought to be a great idea at one time, like low fat, actually turns out later to be not so great. I will try to outline the conclusions that I have come to personally in a short article based on my reading and experience. Remember that these are just my opinions, not fact.

People often ask what they should eat to improve their skin, but in general I think that a healthy diet will be the same for your body as a whole-the skin is not unique in its needs. Attempts to feed the skin by, for instance, eating collagen, will be unsuccessful because the collagen would be broken down in the intestines for the most part. You could do just as well eating your worn-out shoes, as leather is basically collagen. If you are eating healthy though, it will show in your skin. Specific advice for skin that is acne-prone is to avoid simple carbs. Just try to get a teenager to do that though!

In general, I would say that the so-called Mediterranean diet is a good starting point.

Key components of the Mediterranean diet include:

- Getting plenty of exercise and eating your meals with family and friends
- Eating a generous amount of fruits and vegetables
- Consuming healthy fats such as olive oil and canola oil
- Using herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods
- Eating small portions of nuts
- Drinking red wine, in moderation, for some
- Consuming very little red meat
- Eating fish or shellfish at least twice a week

Eating fish is getting a bit dicey due to almost universal contamination with mercury, pcb's, etc. Wild salmon may be ok, but eating it every day gets a bit old, and it's expensive. High quality fish oil each day might be a good daily supplement, and shrimp and shellfish, if you like them are reasonable.\*

Eat only small amounts of chicken. Eggs are probably fine, as is grass-fed beef, (not beef fattened with corn-not that easy to find, but it's out there if you look.) The other questionable food item is pasta. If you eat it, just make sure that it is whole grain, though there are those who would argue for not including any simple carbs at all, i.e., just eat vegetables-especially greens-and fruit, which are mainly complex carbs. It's possible that we started down the wrong path diet-wise when we learned agriculture, rather than having to gather our food. Then as fewer people were needed for farming, it freed the rest of us up to sit on our butts.

If you are not actively trying to lose weight, eat as much extra-virgin olive oil as you like. Even if you are trying to lose weight, a little olive oil is probably better than eating starch. Keep in mind that it is healthy, but it does have a lot of calories. Eat olives and nuts-raw nuts are probably best. (I haven't gotten there yet as I love the crunch of dry roasted).

Beans are a wonderful protein source as a meat substitute. Onions and garlic are great, as are cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and watercress. The more you can eat vegetables raw or barely cooked, the better.

Wine is okay in moderation if you like it-I'm trying, but it gives me headaches and makes me sleepy-perhaps my brain is trying to tell me something. It's hard for me to accept that a toxin like alcohol is actually good for you to drink, but I'm not against it.

Fructose is a bad boy, so no processed foods or pop. (When I say "no", what I mean is minimize-I understand the need to cheat once in a while!) Read labels to eliminate high fructose corn syrup, but keep in mind that regular sugar is half fructose also. The fructose that you get from several servings of fruit is probably all that you want to eat-don't add any extra.

Another big misstep down the road to obesity was when the government started subsidizing all the unhealthy simple carb crops, like corn, making them so much cheaper than vegetables. In most countries sugar is cheaper than the subsidized high fructose corn syrup that we use here. (The subsidies are a big part of the reason that Americans are all "corn-fed".) When I want a sweetener I use xylitol or stevia-I haven't come across anything bad about them yet. Unsweetened green tea is great-maybe three cups a day, which I drink while on the treadmill, like right now while I am composing this at 2 mph walking uphill. It's an acquired taste for the American tongue. Most of us were brought up on sweets!

I take quite a handful of supplements, but hesitate to recommend them for everyone. You are unlikely to hurt yourself with them though, and they are certainly safer than prescription medications that you will end up taking if you don't take care of yourself preventively. Vitamin D is one in

particular that I do recommend for everyone 2,000-4,000 units a day, or whatever it takes with blood testing to get your vitamin D level in the range of around 50. Resveratrol is another that may have significant benefits. A multivitamin is easy. There are probably forty more that I take, with varying degrees of evidence behind them that I won't go into right now.

Once you clean up your diet, you don't need to starve yourself to lose weight, especially if you are exercising at least an hour a day. However, it's beneficial to try to get into the mindset that every little hunger pang does not need to be satisfied. Keep a lot of nuts around for snacks-they may have calories, but they are healthy.

One thing that is difficult is when you are trying to clean your diet but the rest of your family isn't. I find that my will power is sorely tested if I am watching a family member eat something that I love, but I know I shouldn't. It's best to have everyone on board, banish junk food from the house, and eat most meals at home. If it's not there I won't eat it, or even long for it. If it's right under my nose, I'm a goner! But you can be creative and develop new healthy treats. We have come up with a pumpkin, oat bran, dried fruit and a bit of chocolate chip, cake. I'm working out a great hot cacao drink also- easy to make with a half cup of boiling water, some raw Peruvian cacao powder, a bit of vanilla, bit of sweetener, and then half cup of skim milk. Really healthy and good! There are only 60 calories in the cacao, no sugar, and non-fat milk-hard to beat. Now if the danged powder just wouldn't settle at the bottom of the cup...

\*A good resource for which fish or seafood to select is  
[http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr\\_seafoodwatch/sfw\\_recommendations.aspx](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/sfw_recommendations.aspx)

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