



# How Do You Eat?

The Rambam tells us since having a healthy body is from the ways of Hashem, one must distance himself from that which harms his body and conduct himself in ways that are healthy (Hilchos Daos 4:1). Indeed, the Mishna Brura (231:5) writes 'I saw men of good deed, that before they would eat would say behold I want to eat and drink in order to be healthy and strong to serve Hashem.'

Just as a car can transport us from one point to another when it is in good working order so too the body is a vehicle that allows the soul to accomplish its goals in this world. Therefore, one should guard his health.

The Sefer Hachinuch (147) writes it is a matter of common, widespread knowledge among people that according to the food the body is affected, for health or for sickness. Today it is known of the many foods that cause harm to the body- deep fried foods, foods containing margarine, white flour, sugar, and so on. Let us take sugar for instance, which is contained in numerous foods. It removes calcium and other vitamins from the body. It also causes tooth decay, obesity, complications with the arteries, digestive problems among other things Lo Alainu.

The Rambam (introduction to Seder Zeraim) writes a doctor will never prescribe medicine when he can prescribe food. In the words of the Meiri (Introduction to his commentary on the Talmud): one of the soundest principles in medicine is that as long as a doctor can prescribe nutritious food, he should not prescribe medicine.

At an institute in New York that was established to help children who need special care, it was decided to give them- about 5,000 children- only whole grain bread, fresh fruit, etc.- everything natural without artificial additives, white flour, and white sugar. Nearly every child improved astonishingly as the wild ones became quiet, the apathetic ones became normal and the children with the normal skills began to excel. After the children were cured of their problems- mentally and physically- the parents were taught how to feed their children when they return home. The parents reported that as long as they were strict about healthy food, everything was fine. But after indulging in a bag of candy and sweets, there was a drastic decline in their child's health and behaviour. Only after several days of strict diet did the children return to excellent health.

Let us mention what some of our greats have commented on this topic.

1) The Sefer Hachinuch (117) instructs us to only eat foods that are beneficial for the body and that preserve health.

2) In the ethical will of the Rambam, he tells his son 'hate harmful foods as a person hates one who wants to murder him.'

3) The Divrei Malkiel (Shu"t Divrei Malkiel, 2, 53:2)

writes that it is certainly forbidden to eat anything that brings forth an illness because of V'Nishmartem L'Nafshosachem (Devorim 4:15). So, we must guard ourselves from that which may harm our health. This is whether it be harmful to a specific person because of his condition or because of new information that shows it is bad.

4) The Mishna Brura (170:45) writes one should eat that which is good and helpful for healing, and not the temporary foods that are sweet.

5) The Shela informs us to be careful from excessive eating and drinking and have only that which is healthy for the body so that he can serve Hashem. Then all his meals are a Seudas Mitzva.

6) In the words of R' Shimshon Rafael Hirsch: "Eat only healthy food and taste nothing of harmful foods. Of non-healthy foods, taste only a little."

7) Here are the astounding words of the Derech Pikudecha (Lo Saaseh, 34, Chelek Hadibur, 4): A sub-category of murder- Lo Sirtzach- is one who eats and drinks... to fill his desire without considering whether the food is healthy for his body or will harm him.

A car ages better if it is properly maintained. It must be well-cared for and kept in active use if one wants it to last and to continue to function at its best. A major reason a 62-year-old looks, feels and behaves younger than his counterpart is because of improved attention to his maintenance.

One who is young may think he has time to wait to take upon himself a healthy lifestyle. It is said that the younger one is when he starts to practise a healthy lifestyle, the better condition he will be in old age Bez"H. We must realize that illness doesn't just pop up one day rather it is a consequence of an accumulation of occurrences over a lifetime. Thus old people are prone to more illness. Consequently, it is better to take upon a healthy lifestyle and proper nutrition while you are young. This is just as it is said the early investors get the greatest amount of accumulation. The saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." On his 100th birthday, Dr. Steven Smith was asked for the secret of his vitality. His response- take care of your stomach the first 50 years and your stomach will take care of you the next 50 years.

We see people with a fine outward impression- wearing suits and the like- and think all is fine with them. But we don't know what is happening inside their bodies. That is, the medicines they take for reasons such as diabetes, high cholesterol, ulcers, knee problems, arthritis, back problems and so forth. Those who suffer from such illnesses live with the limitations of their disability- and often fears caused by it. There are also

many people that we don't see because they are too ill to be out on the streets.

What constitutes a healthy lifestyle? The essentials are eating nutritious foods, avoiding harmful foods and proper exercise. Tangentially, Physical activity has been proven by many researchers to prevent illness and to serve as a more effective cure than any drug. In addition to this, it is free! It has been said that exercise is the best medicine on earth. Exercise strengthens the entire human machine- the heart, brain, blood vessels, bones, and muscles.

In addition to causing illness, unhealthy eating also affects one's moods and feelings in a negative way. We see today many disorders such as hyperactivity which can be caused by improper eating. One can learn much more Torah and with better concentration if they eat healthier. Those who are successful professional athletes don't eat this junk during the season when they play so as not to hinder their performance. We should do the same so as not to hinder our performance in the service of Hashem.

Although these numerous benefits are a worthwhile investment in shifting to a healthy lifestyle, some may contend that it is too expensive to afford. The saying goes, "People lose their health trying to store up money and then they lose the money trying to restore their health."

One who thinks that having a healthy lifestyle is beyond their financial means should reexamine as looking after our health and preventing illness in the long term is cheaper than treating illness. Consider the following:

a) When one eats healthy he spends no money on pastries, snacks and junk food such as burgers, pizza, chips, sugared drinks, and the like.

b) With the help of Hashem, there should be little expenses for doctors and drugs (surgeries and the like). Likewise, there should be less expenses for dental treatment. This also saves one time since he doesn't need to wait at these clinics until the doctor is available. Incidentally, those who walk or otherwise work out moderately for 30 minutes, five days a week, and those who do not- found that on average, someone who met the exercise guidelines paid 2,500\$ less in annual health care expenses than those who did not.

c) One who embraces this lifestyle and doesn't become sick as a result doesn't lose working days when confined to the house due to illness or that of one of the children.

d) One can work with maximum efficiency as it can increase his energy, as well as increasing his income.

e) A caretaker for the elderly may cost thousands of dollars monthly.

We must keep in mind, "You pay the price for poor health and you enjoy the price of good health." In light of what we mentioned, let us weigh Schara Kneged Hefsaidda; the reward compared to the loss (See Avos 2:1).

**Rabbi Yehoshua Alt**

*To join the thousands of recipients and receive these insights free on a weekly email, obtain previous articles, feedback, comments, to support or dedicate this publication, or if you know anyone who is interested in receiving these insights weekly, please contact the author Rabbi Yehoshua Alt at [parshadt28@gmail.com](mailto:parshadt28@gmail.com).*

*תודה. לעילוי שמחת שמואל אביגדור בן יצחק מאיר*