

Discussion Questions

1) My consumption of vitamin E appears to be significantly below the recommended nutrients. While this could be true, I think certain preparation techniques may provide the needed nutrients. Corn oil would easily provide the required amount of vitamin A. Additionally, my body appears to be lacking magnesium. I think the lack of any beans in my diet can contribute to this; I don't really like eating anything bean related. Fortunately, my diet now involves tofu (whether I like it or not) on a regular basis and luckily tofu is high in magnesium.

2) The most notable difference in my diet is iron. I am not overly worried about this, but believe it is caused by consuming meat (particularly beef). Another nutrient I am consuming too much of is niacin. Because my consumption is just around 150%, I am only a little worried. I don't have any of the toxicity symptoms, however the consequence of low blood pressure is a little alarming, as my blood pressure is quite low. My guess is that my niacin consumption is high due to meat consumption. Lastly, my riboflavin consumption is quite high, which is most likely because of my large consumption of corn flakes with milk. However, I'm not particularly worried about my riboflavin consumption at the time of measurement. Since coming to Asia though, my concerns about eating enough riboflavin are raising. The list of riboflavin in selected foods alerts me to the fact that it is much more difficult to reach my RDA, as opposed to the meat, seafood and dairy rich New Zealand.

3) I should be consuming 2414 calories, however I am consuming 2483. Unfortunately, these numbers are a bit misleading. When examining the foods I ate, it is easy to notice that I am actually only consuming, maybe on average, 1500 "real" calories a day. I state this conclusion because many calories originate from beer, and other from high-calorie, low nutrition foods.

My current weight is around 170 pounds; however I am reaching the conclusion that I'm a skinny fat guy. While this appears to be an oxymoron, it is still a true statement. During the day I require very little energy, either in New Zealand or here in Taiwan. My work and entertainment both involve my computer/laptop, so physical activity is at a minimum. Daily exercise occurs typically when I am trying to catch my bus; other than this, I walk only 1-2 miles a day.

I am slowly starting to utilize the gym more often. While highly inconvenient (an hour bus/subway ride), I am starting to fret seeing my – mother. She works part time at a gym, and has always been nutrition/health conscious.

Ideally I would like to be 175 pounds, but of good weight (muscle). I would rather be 175 pounds of muscle than 170 pounds of "flab."

Weight estimates, including the Metropolitan Weight Tables, estimate me anywhere from 165-175 pounds. Exercising regularly (weight lifting, so putting on bulk) would yield results easily above 170 pounds. My shoulders are quite wide, so if I drop below 170 I would look "unhealthy."

4) My diet is slightly comparable to the national American average, however my diet is much higher in carbohydrates (52%) and lower in fat (35%). Compared to the recommended proportions, I should be consuming less fat and more protein and carbohydrates.

I believe my diet was based around semi-fast food. While I have a phobia of fast food restaurants, much of my food cooked at the time mimicked what could be bought at such stores. Sausage rolls, a New Zealand favorite, cannot be healthy (besides being high in fat, their carcinogenic factor must be high). One aspect of my diet that must be changed is fruit and vegetable intake. At the time of measurement I ate basically nothing from these groups. I currently am eating more from these food groups, but still nowhere near what is asked by the food pyramid.

5) As briefly mentioned above, I am nowhere near the food guide pyramid. At the time of my measurement, I ate almost no fruits or vegetables. In fact, the iceberg lettuce on my kebab burger (I know now) mainly makes me feel good about eating vegetables, but actually provides mediocre nutrition. The change is simple, I need to consume more vegetables and fruits. I think my meat consumptions and carbohydrate consumption is accurate, but should be shifted towards a more healthy alternative. The processed nature of some of the things I was eating (both carbohydrate and meat) now seems a little scary.

6) The carbohydrates consumed were not particularly sticky, most were breads (not pastries). Every carbohydrate I consumed either *was* a meal, or was part of a meal. In regards to dental health, the biggest problem in my diet is coffee and tea. When I was in New Zealand I drank tea on a regular basis, and coffee almost as regularly. This cannot be good for my teeth, regardless if I brush twice a day.

7) My potassium intake was almost exactly what was recommended, however my sodium intake was significantly (almost 150%) what is recommended. I think a leading contributing factor in this is sausage rolls (processed). The lasagna I consumed significantly increased the potassium amount for the day, but I do not fully understand why (the lasagna was hand made).

8) My fiber consumption appears to be somewhat of a dichotomy. The sheets and analysis tell me I am consuming almost the exact amount of fiber I should be, however I am not certain. I apologize if what I am about to say is "too graphic," however: my duty almost always floats. I've heard that is a good sign you eat enough fiber. But once again, I look at my diet (especially these three days) and don't feel like I'm eating enough.

Two easy changes would be a) oatmeal (as in my perfect diet) or b) bran cereal (or other bran foods).

9) My cholesterol is at decent levels, but deceptively so. Because of the few calories I eat, there isn't the ability to add cholesterol. Luckily I don't really like eating fast food, and hate fried food, so my cholesterol level should remain low even when adding more calories. Right now (in Taiwan) I'm almost certain my cholesterol is quite low; I eat almost no fried foods, and a lot of the food I do eat is steamed.

10) My measured diet had about 10% of my calories from saturated fat, 9% from mono-unsaturated fat, and only 3-4% from poly-unsaturated fat. I'm a little scared about the saturated fat levels, just relating to my heart (my father's side has had some small heart issues). Most likely the saturated fat comes from sausage rolls and hamburgers. One shift I would really like to make in my diet is from beef to fish (in order to lower saturated fat and increase the omega-3 polyunsaturated fats).

11) Indeed, my diet at the time of measurement I believe, if maintained over a prolonged period of time, would lead to adverse health. The three things most notable in the diet is consuming hamburgers (even though they were cooked on a George Foreman, at home), sausage rolls and beer. I've been lucky with good genes and a fast metabolism, but neither of these can help forever.

Top Strengths: no fast food, no fried food.

Top Weaknesses: high beef consumption, beer, not enough calories.

Ideally the changes are simple. I need to consume less low-quality (high fat) beef, consume less processed foods, and consume more fruits and vegetables. More specifically, I should consume dark green leafy vegetables, and eat as much raw fruit as possible. At the time of assessment, I was not taking any vitamins or minerals. Now I am taking Centrum, "from A to Zinc." Indeed I understand that supplements are not a substitute for a balanced diet, I personally believe they can fill the holes if a vitamin is missed on an occasional basis.

After much contemplation, I believe these steps would be most helpful for my diet:

1) Eat at least ½ of tofu every day.

Why: I am uncertain whether I am actually receiving enough vitamin E. My measurement said no, however I do not know what oils are always used to prepare my food. Either way, here in Taipei there is a significant amount of pollution. Hopefully vitamin E will allow my body to reject polluted air particles. The consumption of Tofu will also help me achieve my magnesium requirements, another area I am short in.

2) Eat 1 carrot (or equivalent) every day.

Why: My eyes are being destroyed through my work. I can already feel them straining at times, and I would prefer to prevent damage as long as possible. Vitamin A seems like an easy way to do this.

3) Eat at least 3 servings leafy vegetables every day.

Why: I'll admit, I'm concerned of getting cancer later on in life. The dark leafy vegetables appear to be one of the best ways to prevent free radicals.

4) Eat fish instead of beef/pork.

Why: Lower saturated fat, increase omega-3 levels.

5) Eat healthy breakfast; specifically with fruit, milk and not processed foods.

Why: My breakfast meals have historically been pretty poor. Hopefully consuming more

fruit will allow me to more eagerly tackle the day, and prevent me from eating poor in the afternoon (i.e. continue eating healthy).