The key factor in healthy eating concerns the standard of the foods that we eat. Quality is fast becoming an overriding concern. Sadly we live in an age where food additives and processed meals are commonplace. The phenomenal increase in food sensitivities can be attributed in large part to the detrimental chemicals added to our foods.

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Buying organic ensures that we are consuming ‘clean’ foods, untainted by added ‘nasties’. The success of the organic movement has highlighted the increasing demand for healthier produce. Unfortunately many food manufacturers have jumped on the ‘organic bandwagon’.

Often people may think they are making the healthy choice in opting for certain foods simply because they are marketed as ‘organic’. However many of these foods can still contain appreciable amounts of unnecessary and detrimental additives, including sugar or salt. This is why it is always best to read food labels before making a purchase.

The consumer also needs to watch out for organic foods of the refined variety. These are not ‘whole foods’. Whole foods are ‘complete’ foods, which contain all the nutritional factors that make them beneficial, as designed by nature.

These foods are the missing link in the average 21st Century diet. Lack of such food is the major contributing cause for our population’s declining health. Brown rice is an example of a whole food. White rice is the refined version. Removal of the husk, bran and germ from the whole rice grain results in a food deficient in vital nutrients. Refined foods should be avoided as they are low in health giving properties and they promote nutritional deficiencies.

Fresh vegetables and fruits should form the mainstay of any diet, along with a variety of whole grains. I emphasize vegetables over fruits because on the whole, vegetables are more beneficial in terms of nutrient content. Seeds, nuts and the various vegetable, seed and nut oils are also important additions to the diet.

Many people are deficient in the vital fats contained in seeds and nuts as the average Western diet tends to be lacking in these foods. The same can be said of fish. The cold-water variety is extremely beneficial. Again, the average Westerner does not tend to consume much fish.

If eaten, meat should be consumed in moderation. In the West, we tend to eat far too much animal protein. In excess, meat will contribute greatly to inflammatory conditions such as eczema and asthma. This can lead on to more severe conditions including arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis.

Meat quality is also a big issue. We live in an age where commercial animal foods are pumped full of toxic chemicals. As with other food additives, these will have an adverse effect on our health. When choosing meat, always go for the organic and/or free-range options. Legumes (beans and pulses) provide another healthy protein source.

Basically, a healthy diet should include a wide variety of different, ‘clean’ whole foods.

“life in all its fullness is this Mother Nature obeyed.”- Dr Weston A. Price Excerpt from Natural Nutrition Now - A Simple Guide to Healthy Eating by nutritional therapist Samantha Flower, available free from Holistic Local - the world’s fastest-growing holistic directory and social network. Receive Samantha's Guide plus seven more informative, holistic e-books when you join Holistic Local.

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