

Torah Sources for Healthy Living

- **Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Chapter 32** which deals with caring for the body in a natural way, states:

“One who desires to preserve his health needs to understand the emotional aspects. They include joy worry, anger and fear, all of which influence the soul. The wise person needs to rejoice in his lot throughout life, and not to worry about a world which is not his; not to seek luxuries but to be of a good disposition and in a constant state of joy, which brings about an increase in body heat, improved digestion and elimination, and strengthening the vision and all senses. It also strengthens the power of the intellect.

But one should not take too much pleasure in eating and drinking as fools do, for with too much physical pleasure, the natural heat dissipates, the heart becomes cold and one may die suddenly before one's time. This is especially likely to happen to obese people, since their natural body heat is weak, as their arteries are narrow and the blood flow, which is the source of heat, is slow.

Anxiety is the opposite of happiness and is also harmful, as it makes the body cold, and the natural heat is gathered to the heart and this can also lead to death. Anger arouses the heat of the body and can lead to fever. Fear makes the body cold, which causes the fearful person to tremble, and when the cold becomes excessive it can lead to death. One should especially take care not to eat when angry or fearful or anxious, only in a state of calm happiness.”

- **Yerushalami Shabbos 43a:** Hashem sets every living creature's lifespan. If He decrees that a certain person will become ill, he will become ill. And if He decrees that someone should die of a disease that shortens his life, then “there is no wisdom and no counsel and no understanding when facing Hashem,” and, “who can fathom the secrets of Hashem. Surely a person should not bring upon himself diseases that have not been decreed. And if a disease has been decreed, he should not hasten it upon himself before the time it has been decreed, as it is written, “99 people die through neglect and one through Heavenly decree.”
- *I CAN GUARANTEE that everyone who follows the paths that I have described will be free from disease until the end of their lives, they will never need a doctor, and they will remain healthy throughout their lifetime.” (Rambam, Hilchos Deos 4, 20)*
- “Hate harmful foods just as you would hate a bitter enemy who wants to kill you.” - The Rambam's advice to his son

Rambam's 3 simple components to guarantee long life & good health:

1. Eating 2/3 as much as you think you need.

2. 20-60 minutes of sweating and elevated heart rate
3. Good (loose) bowel movements

For someone wanting to read a comprehensive summary of why and how to transform your health and transform your life with Jewish sources and Rabbinic Approvals, there is one book I emphatically recommend:

I GUARANTEE
 The Rambam’s Promise
The Jewish Guide to Healthy Eating and Healthy Living
 A Self-Help System without Doctors or Drugs
 Written by Mrs. Chaya Sara Cohen
 Published by Myzlik Publishing

I cannot recommend this book strongly enough. To give you a sampling of this book, I will include four small excerpts here:

Excerpt #1: Pages 88-89

Here is an extremely important point to consider:

For several generations now we have been eating white flour and white sugar, and so we’ve inherited toxic, malnourished body tissues, literally from the time we’re born. We often hear people say things like, “My grandfather smoked a pack of cigarettes every day and he was healthy till age ninety-six!” or, “My grandmother ate candy and lived until eighty-nine!”

Yes, because they benefited from the good health that they had inherited from their parents. However, we for the most part have already inherited two or three generations of defective nutrition, and we simply can’t afford the “luxury” of eating anything that comes to hand.

It’s a fact: diseases are on the increase. More and more people are being hospitalized. More and more children are suffering from obesity and diabetes. It’s our duty to prevent these calamities, and if we fail or just sit back and ignore the situation, who know how much worse the situation will become? Perhaps this is why the Rambam concludes (his written guarantee for good health) as follows: “I guarantee (good health) – unless a person is born with defective health, or was accustomed to unhealthy behavior from birth, or in the case of an epidemic, famine, or drought.”

Excerpt #2: Pages 92-95

THE BODY – THE HOME OF THE SOUL

As is brought in the sacred works, the body is the dwelling place of the soul. When someone lives in a home, he has to attend carefully to its cleanliness and maintenance. A leakage in the drainage system, a fault in the electricity, a broken window – all these disrupt the course of his life.

We can apply this to the body as well, which is designated to serve as a dwelling for the soul from the time a person is born until the appointed day that Hashem set for him to be called before the Heavenly court.

A person is duty-bound during his lifetime to look after his dwelling while always remembering his main purpose in life, for which he was put into this world. This is our aim in writing this book – to provide instructions for the maintenance of the house so that a person can fulfill his true purpose – observing Torah and mitzvos.

- *Note what is written in Tur Orach Chaim ch. 155 (also quoted in Mishnah Berurah): “It is a mitzvah to act with moderation and proper conduct that will bring one health and strength to serve one’s Creator.”*
- *The Rambam (in Hilchos Deos ch. 2, 3) (basic translation): “When man eats and drinks, he shouldn’t just do so for pleasure...like a dog or a donkey, but should eat whatever is beneficial to the body, whether sweet or bitter. He should never eat anything damaging to his health, even if it’s tasty.”*
- *The Rambam writes further in Hilchos Deos (4,1): “Since ultimately the perfect health of the body is the way of Hashem, as it is impossible for anyone to perceive Hashem’s greatness and infinite compassion when he is unwell, consequently it’s necessary to keep away from anything harmful to the body, and to accustom oneself to that which strengthens and heals it.”*
- *The Chazon Ish (Kovetz Igros Chason Ish, part 1, 137): “I value the natural approach to matters of health, counting this as a mitzvah and a duty. Precision and care in deciding the means of attaining good health are a labor valued by Hashem.”*

And just as a person moving into a new residence, fully fitted and furnished, receives from the contractor the manufacturer’s instructions – where the electric sockets are, how to operate the solar heater and the boiler, the most effective ways for cleaning and maintaining the new floors, the sinks and the countertops – in the same way when we receive our complex and fully fitted “dwelling place, “ i.e., our body, we too need to pay attention to the Manufacturer’s instructions so that our “house” can remain firmly established.

Excerpt #3: Pages 133 – 135

VERY IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES THAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW...and especially those who ask, “How can I keep to this method of nutrition” (and who wants to give up eating cake and sweets, etc.)?

There are people who “find themselves” eating chocolate, cookies and cake even when they’re not hungry, and others who “need” to eat chocolate or something sweet. Afterwards they’re annoyed with themselves, “Why can’t I overcome this craving?” and they feel guilty that they’ve failed to control their eating habits.

This vicious circle of eating sweet and afterwards feeling guilty begins with eating white sugar and white flour. We cause our bodies to become addicted – in the same way that some people are addicted to cigarettes, coffee and drugs – though not to the same degree.

WE SHALL NOW EXPLAIN FROM A BIOLOGICAL STANDPOINT WHAT CAUSES THIS ADDICTION:

- *As is generally known, food containing carbohydrates releases energy which is transformed in the body into sugar. When we consume “empty” carbohydrates made from white flour (such as regular bread, pasta, cakes made from white flour, etc.) and also when we eat white rice, and, of course, foods containing sugar, our bodies receive a “sugar bombshell” which they are unable to cope with. The sugar is rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream, the sugar level rises immediately, and at the same time the temperature and the energy level in the body rise. But after a short while, the sugar level drops drastically, and we feel tired, nervous, and lacking in energy. This makes us desire more sugar, and thus the whole pattern repeats itself.*
- *The whole process described above begins from the first bite one takes of food containing white flour, white rice, or white sugar.*
- *It’s similar to the way sacred books compare the pleasures of this world to drinking salt water; the more one drinks the more one needs to drink even more, while his thirst is never quenched.*
- *In contrast, with complex carbohydrates like whole meal flour and whole (brown) rice, the sugar is absorbed slowly by the body, the sugar levels are balanced, and no addiction to sugar or carbohydrates is formed in our brains. As a result, we feel satisfied, not “dreaming of food” all the time, and we maintain this splendid feeling throughout the day.*
- *Note that even compound carbohydrates, if not chewed properly, can cause fermentation in the digestive system.*
- *As we’ve explained before, it’s evident from the Rambam’s words that his guarantee doesn’t apply to one who poisons his body with inferior food (and today we exemplify this through all the white sugar, white flour, margarine, etc that we consume.*
- *If you want to be free from sugar cravings, you should choose to eat only cooked whole grains such as buckwheat, millet, quinoa, amaranth, and wild (black) rice, and sprouted whole wheat or spelt bread.*

Excerpt #4: Pages 305 – 307

People may eat healthy food of the highest standard, but if they eat huge quantities, it can cause blood poisoning; they will suffer time and again from the process of detoxification, and also suffer from unpleasant flatulence (wind) odors.

- *Rambam Hilchos Deos (4,2): “A person should not eat until his stomach is full, but leave a fourth of his stomach empty.”*

To illustrate our point: If you place a full load of laundry into the dryer and fill the machine to full capacity, the laundry won’t dry – even if you set the dryer on a double program. But when you leave a lot of space in the dryer (more than a quarter of its capacity) it will work efficiently. So too with other machines – if you overtax them, they won’t work properly.

It's the same with our stomachs, as the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch states: "Digestion is most effective when the quantity of food is not great, and is thus easy to digest. For if a person eats a great deal, and the stomach is full, then it's hard to digest, since the stomach cannot spread and contract as its nature and grind up the food properly. Just like fire – when you place too much wood on it, it doesn't burn well – so with food in the stomach. Thus one who wants to preserve his health needs to be careful to eat moderate quantities of food according to the temperament of his body, not too little and not to satiety."

- *Rambam (Hilchos Deos 4, 15): "Overeating is to the body like a poisonous drug. This is the basis of all illness. Most of the illnesses that beset us occur either because of inferior food or because of over-filling the stomach even with healthy food. King Solomon has said in his wisdom, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from distress", that is to say, he who guards his mouth from eating inferior food or from overeating, and guards his tongue from speaking what is unnecessary.*
- *Kuntres Totzaos Chayim (78): "When one is in the middle of eating and still feels a desire to continue his meal, but instead he stops eating and gives up his desire to eat for the glory of his Creator, this will be considered in Heaven as if he fasted. About such a person it is written that his table atones like an altar.*
- *If, while eating, we feel thanks and gratitude to Hashem for sustaining us with this food, then the act of eating becomes an act of thanksgiving, not taking, like an animal.*

- **What about grain?!?** The Rambam said it can be good to eat some type of clean grain each AM. But grains back then were NOTHING like they are today. Dr. Debbie Herbst (Lubavitcher Jew in Melbourne, AU who was our family physician and featured in the documentary "*That Sugar Film*") explains that wheat has been modified scientifically to grow bigger/stronger/less prone to infestation etc. in order to make it more economical (read: profitable) to grow. Therefore, the wheat we know today is not the wheat that Eretz Yisrael is known for... Hence people developing intolerances etc. Spelt or CLEAN "grains", such as buckwheat, quinoa, etc are much easier on the digestive system.
 - But how much daily?!? Even back then, Rambam said equivalent to half of a piece of toast.
- Retraining your taste buds comes in cycles...a week, a month, a year.
- "Do not follow your desire to eat everything your palate desires if the food is harmful, because it will damage your body." – *Reishis Chochma, Shaar Hakedushah*
- Rav Hirsch: "Don't weaken your strength by eating and sleeping in a disorganized manner."

(FYI: I can tell you why I know with all my heart that this path is a Torah path. If you're looking for a good nutritional system or health path to follow that's satiated in kedusha, ask me about the Max Gerson and Freidiker Rebbe story.)

We put my husband on an extreme clean-foods detox following the Gerson method, and his body responded in shocking ways. He lost 35 pounds (16 kg) in four months, (lost a total of 60 lbs/27 kg now), and has more energy, no longer has cravings, no longer snacks and grazes all day, it totally transformed his addiction to food and his "sloppy" eating. And he eats a LOT!! He still eats high fat, high calorie foods (avocado, tahini, almonds, etc.), but all totally CLEAN, so they don't get clogged up in his body.

This isn't a "diet"...it's transforming your life to heal unhealthy attachments to food!

My son eats the same way too. Yes, he still eats garbage out of the house sometimes. But I can feel confident that he has a healthy foundation based on what I feed him at home.

- Tips for starting babies out healthy: *Baby Sleep Solutions*
- Tips for migrating older kids over to clean eating: start slow...little by little...baby steps!

Economic considerations:

(Summarized from *The Jewish Guide to Healthy Eating and Healthy Living*, p. 438-439)

Anyone who thinks this system is beyond their financial means should make the following simple calculations:

- There is no money spent on pastries, snacks, and junk food.
- There are no expenses for doctors and drugs, less expenses for dental treatment, and you save time waiting in line at clinics and pharmacies.
- You don't lose working days when confined to the house due to your illness or that of one of your children.
- Women who need hired help due to low energy may be able to minimize this once their energy increases.
- Your wardrobe will fit nicely again, so you won't have to buy new clothes
- A caretaker for the elderly costs thousands (sometimes tens of thousands!) of dollars a month. Investment in good health is by far the best economy, and the Rambam promises us that when we follow his rules, we won't need such nursing care.

So, we either pay now or pay later. An ounce in prevention is prevention is worth a pound of cure.

And even if you're not yet able to eat 100% healthy, remember this:

"I now desire to eat and drink in order to be healthy and strong to serve my creator."

Mishnah Berurah in the name of Chayei Adam (Ch 231, 5)

The spiritual component to healthy eating

*Research from modern science is now supporting what our Sages have been saying for thousands of years. It's not only what we eat, but also how we eat it that affects our health. Below is an overview of steps to eating in holiness. There is **much** more to be said about this in a workshop or video where I can elaborate on all the components and take the important time to explain the philosophies behind these steps.*

Steps to eating in holiness:

- Kosher food (Unkosher food desensitizes the Jewish soul to the presence of Hashem.)
- Bracha while holding the food or drink, looking at it, and with full focus on gratitude for the item.
- Sit while making bracha AND eating or drinking.
- Eat only when you can create the proper environment of holiness.
- Make sure that you are eating to feed your G-dly soul as an act of worship to Hashem and not eating to satisfy your flesh like a mere animal.
- Put fork down between each bite.
- Close your eyes and focus on savoring the taste of the food.
- Chew it until it becomes almost liquid in your mouth before swallowing (32 times)
- Meditate on all the things that had to happen to get this food to you.
- Focus on being grateful to Hashem for providing it.
- Be aware that you are elevating the sparks of holiness within the food by making it part of a Jewish person.
- Never eat more than you need. Eat only until you are 2/3 full.
- Do not eat on impulse. Instant cravings or sudden impulses to eat are the sitra achra accusing you in Heaven.
- Do not eat greedily or hastily. While you are eating focus on developing your fear of Heaven.
- Do not gulp your food down like a glutton.
- Eat at a moderate pace, calmly, with excellent table manners, just like if an important guest were present in your home. Even when you are alone.
- Remember that even the sitra achra wants you to conquer your eating habits!

Find me on Facebook & I'll share all of my weekly recipes & tips with you. You can come over to our house for a Shabbos & I'll show you how we do Shabbos according to Rambam. We'll find a day to have you all over & I'll teach you how to make raw desserts that your whole family will LOVE! Most importantly, don't forget the reason WHY to do this: just like WHY to keep kosher and Shabbos & tznius...the passion of the brochas!!