

Investing In Your Diet – by Danielle Dresden

During March, which is National Nutrition Month, the American Dietetic Association wants people to learn how the food and activity choices they make today will affect their health tomorrow.

In other words, your diet is an investment in your health.

Unfortunately, Americans seem to be as lax about their nutritional choices as they are about savings. Although in 1991 the National Cancer Institute recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables to promote health, so far only 32% of Americans are doing it.

To improve your caloric balance sheet, try translating money management tips into nutritional advice. It's helpful to start by taking the standard financial advice of "Make your money work for you," and do the same with what you eat.

A Big Mac, medium fries and Coke will cost you 1,106 calories. Consider an average diet of 2,000 calories and this lunch eats up more than half your nutritional paycheck. Is that really how you want to spend it?

Rather than purchasing the nutritional equivalent of junk bonds, look for foods that can actually do something for you, like proteins, fibers and "superfoods" like cruciferous vegetables and blueberries.

Money managers say a comprehensive list of income and expenditures will help balance your finances, and it can work for your eating habits, too. Write down what and how much you eat for two to four weeks, as well as your activity levels. Identify your trouble spots, like snacking in front of the television, and find ways to avoid temptation.

Planning and pacing are key to financial planning and healthy nutrition. You don't have to spell out a month's worth of menus, but giving some thought to daily and weekly meals and snacks will help you eat a balanced and healthy diet.

This also facilitates the dieter's equivalent of saving for a big purchase, like a car. Nutritionists recommend healthy eating every day, but when you're attending a big event where food is a featured guest, you can plan ahead to keep it from completely disrupting your program.

Just as it's wise to suspect get-rich quick schemes, it's prudent to doubt programs or pills promising quick weight loss. Simply put, there aren't many genuine shortcuts in life, particularly when it comes to things we value, like being svelte or successful.

After all, "Anything that sounds too good to be true, probably is." Stick with a well-thought out, balanced and diversified approach for fiscal and physical health.