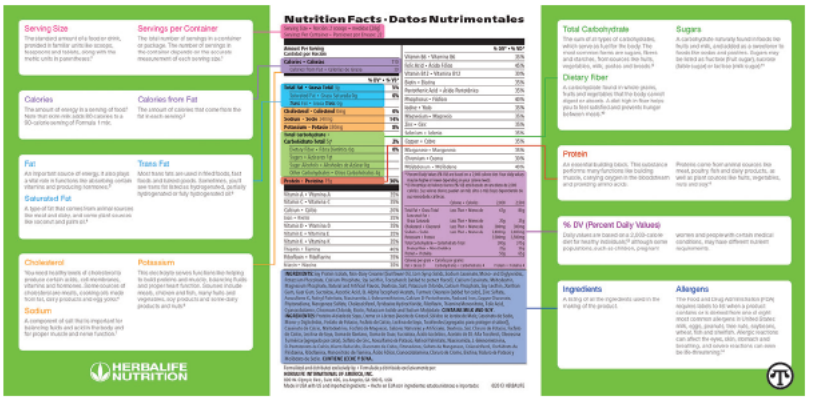
News Of Nutrition

How Americans In 'Food Deserts' Or 'Food Swamps' Can Still Fight Off Obesity



It's never too early or too late to make positive changes in your diet or fitness.

(NAPSA)—It may come as a surprise to some, but millions of people right here in the United States are suffering from malnutrition. Fortunately, there are solutions.

The Problems

A recent study by Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity found many people are faced with food supply issues. They live in "food deserts," where access to healthy food options, including fresh fruits and vegetables, is limited because stores are too far away, or "food swamps," where there is an overabundance of unhealthy choices, such as fast-food restaurants and convenience stores.

Doctor's Opinion

"Food security is more than simply having access to food," explains Dr. John Agwunobi, former Assistant Secretary of Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and current Chief Health and Nutrition Officer at Herbalife. "The definition has evolved over the last few decades, and the most current definition of food security includes access to nutritious food."

An Answer

Even in food deserts and swamps, healthy eating can be achieved by making informed decisions.

Dr. Agwunobi recommends health education and finding a community of like-minded individuals who can help change people's outlook on their health decisions and behavior.

"Let me be clear, education and a supportive community do not solve the problem of food security or the fundamental lack of investment in underserved communities to bring nutritious food to those communities. However, they do help people make healthier choices when choosing between the 'processed' foods available to them," he adds.

For example, he says, it's wise to learn to understand the FDA's Nutrition Facts label, available on all packaged food sold in the United States. Understanding the nutritional information available on food labels and restaurant menus can empower you to make smarter eating decisions, choosing from a variety of foods and beverages that are higher in nutrient density.

Nutrient density is a measure of how much nutrition you get per calorie from the food you eat. Consider two food items with the same number of calories. One can provide your body with the protein, fiber, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals you need; the other may have only empty calories from sugar and fat with no significant nutrients. For example, when you're looking for a quick snack, reach for a fruit or vegetable or a high-quality protein bar or shake to help you feel fuller, longer.

What Else Can You Do?

Balanced nutrition is only part of the equation for a healthy and happy life. A consistent exercise regimen is also important. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says regular physical activity can reduce the burden of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers, and can prevent early death.

Another help is to surround yourself with a supportive community of like-minded people who also want to live a healthy active lifestyle, such as by joining an Herbalife Nutrition club. This can significantly increase the odds of reaching your health goals.

In fact, a study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that people who regularly walk in groups have lower blood pressure, resting heart rate and total cholesterol, along with a reduction in body fat and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Learn More

Many free nutrition and fitness resources, including recipes and fitness videos, are available at www.discovergoodnutrition.com.