Health Nutrition Project

Personal Nutritional Analysis

Name

Class

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Date
ChooseMyPlate.gov

Working with ChooseMyPlate.gov has been a big “ah-ha” moment for me. The site gave me the understanding of how what you put in your mouth is distributed throughout your body into nutrient categories, energy balance, etc. This program lays all of your food intake, physical activity, and diet quality in lament terms and easy to follow guides. The site and program promotes living a healthy life and prevention of chronic diseases.

The program was very straightforward, giving you as many resources and tools needed to calculate your food calories, energy balance, energy intake, and physical activity. Instead of solely explaining what foods and nutrients one is lacking in, the site provides many charts and graphs that make it easier for visual learners to see what areas need improvement. The one aspect of this site that I did not like was the resources offered in the ‘Diet and Health Related Links’. This is because there is a small disclaimer on the bottom of the page that states “the listing of WWW site links from this page does not constitute an endorsement of the information provided at the sites” (United States Department of Agriculture 2010). I believe that if a government site is dedicated to providing information towards a healthy America, it needs to advocate correct and updated information in food and nutrition.

I had never kept a food journal before and it was very interesting to see that a simple taco does not constitute one food item, but is actually a large quantity of items. When recording my food intake I came to realize what I was really putting into my body. As stated before, an uncomplicated taco turned into a multi itemed food that consisted of meat, cheese, tortilla(s), salsa, lettuce, etc., which had never crossed my mind before this project. Viewing my results of the two day challenge I felt very guilty because I could not believe what vital nutrients I was
keeping from my body. Examining the nutrient intake and dietary guideline, I came to realize how there is a possibility of chronic diseases due to my weight, poor diet, and lack of exercise. After attending Whittier College and playing softball for four years I had never really thought long and hard about the serious link between good nutrition and regular physical activity, mostly because I had a hard workout regimen that allowed me to eat whatever I wanted, without gaining much weight. It wasn’t until I graduated this last May when I realized that not running made my jeans fit a bit snug. This ultimate realization on how my life and body has changed in a short time due to poor health also became clear while doing this project.

MyTracker informed me that I need to increase my grain and milk intake and chose a diet low in saturated and total fat. A way I can improve my health is by implementing the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) into my daily life (2010). These guidelines suggest Americans to aim for fitness, build a healthy base, and chose sensibly. I have found that my continual weight gain is due to the increased calorie intake and lack of exercise, so I must ‘aim for fitness’. A woman’s body requires 40 different nutrients, so I must ‘build a healthy base’ that includes nutrient dense foods, such as, grains, vegetables, and fruits. I should also ‘choose sensibly’; this recommends a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, with moderation in total fat. Because of my height to weight ratio I am considered slightly overweight, which puts me at a potential risk for obesity and chronic diseases. Obesity affects over millions of American adults and children, which represents one of the most challenging public health problems we face in the 21st century. Technological advances, over consumption of calories, and the percent of people who engage in little or no physical activity all contribute to the current epidemic of obesity. Reducing the prevalence of obesity could significantly improve the overall health of the population. Haskell and colleagues reported in 2007 that this would involve a reduction in the
population mean body mass index (BMI), move toward the normal range of 23 (Haskell et al 1-10). Thus far, most approaches to treat or prevent obesity have not been effective. Strategies to increase community awareness of the lack of participation in physical activity and to get people to buy into the value of moderate physical activity are necessary as a first step in treating the obesity problem. Community-wide education needs to encourage people to walk more, climb stairs and find more physically active modes of performing everyday tasks (DHHS 2000). This process should involve entire families in order to establish non-sedentary lifestyles. The physical and social environments in which people live need to be restructured to make these changes possible and to encourage and reinforce them. It may seem like a daunting task to get entire communities to become more active therefore, approaches across the public domain is an overwhelming task but intersectoral models and establishing physical activity coalitions could be developed to support this initiative.

Having a free online governmental program where I can follow guidelines that will reduce my risk of obesity and chronic diseases is crucial, not only to my health but public health in general. Government supported public health agencies are critical components of the nation’s response to a healthier lifestyle at the national, state, and local levels. State and local governments can focus on the specific needs of their communities’ populations as many of these public health issues require decisions at the state, county, or city level (United States General Accounting Office 2004). Actions on street and neighborhood design, planning for parks and community recreational facilities, and locations of new schools and retail food facilities are usually up to the local zoning boards or planning commissions. Efforts for improving local environment for healthier living can be tailored to local residents and institutions and be quickly
adapted and revised to meet changing demands or for integrating new approaches. If Americans do not act fast on the continuing concern over the rapidly escalating obesity epidemic, we will soon find ourselves a nation where almost all deaths are due to diseases linked to obesity such as diabetes and heart disease.
Works Cited

Haskell, W.L., Lee, I.M., Pate, R.R., Powell, K.E., Blair, S.N., Franklin, B.A., Macera, C.A.


United States Department of Agriculture. MyPyramid Tracker.


