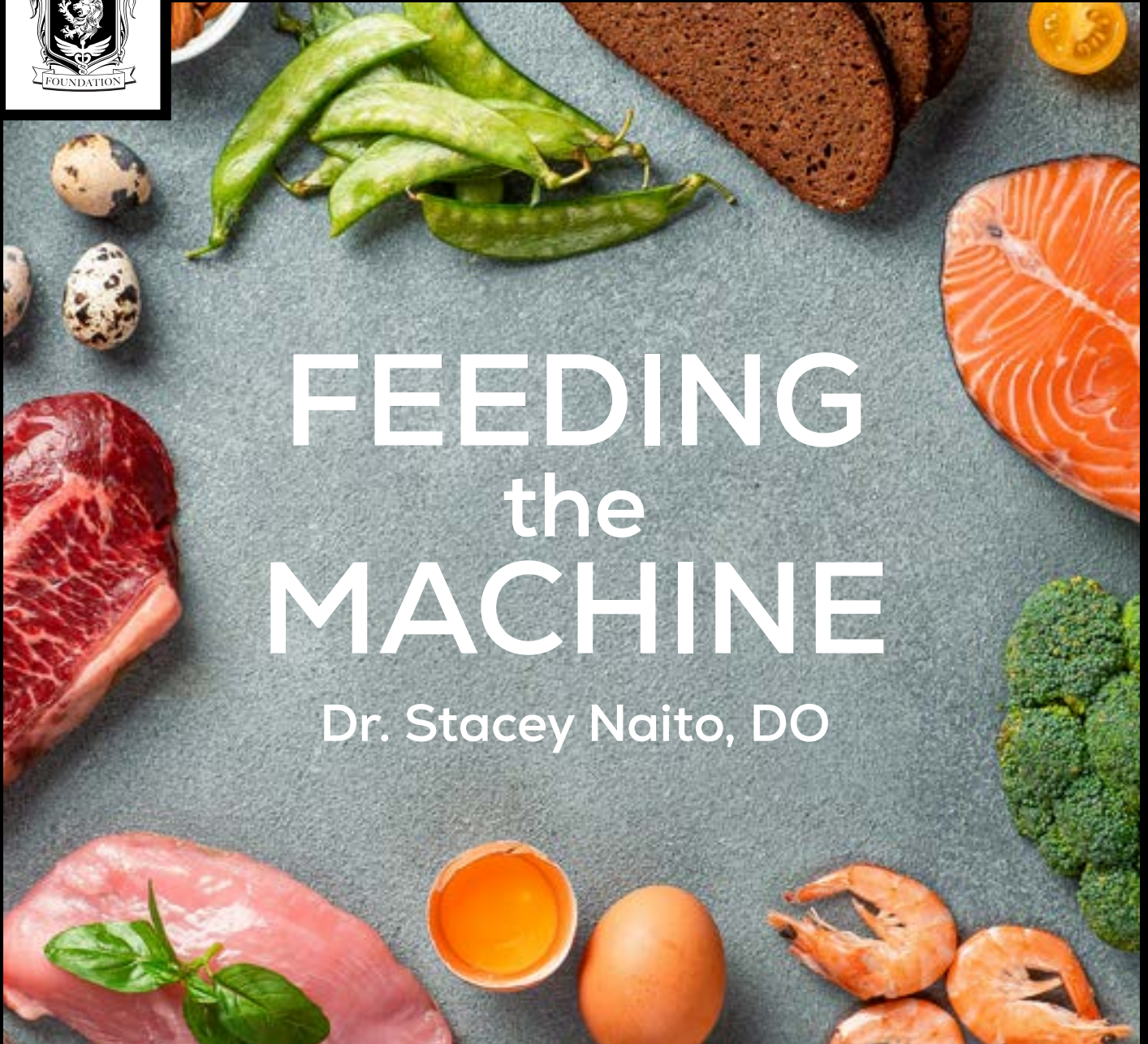




## Nutrition Corner



# FEEDING the MACHINE

Dr. Stacey Naito, DO

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e all have a choice when it comes to what we put in our bodies. Some people make a conscious effort to consume healthy, nutrient-dense options. Others brazenly, and mistakenly, believe that by some miracle, the junk they throw in their bellies won't harm them. Let's get one thing straight: the old adage, "You are what you eat" is absolutely true. If you insist on eating

sweets, you can count on those foods to wreak havoc on your entire body, while healthy food options are an insurance policy for longevity and optimal health.

The more processed a food is, the more it will adversely affect the body, sparking inflammation which does some pretty nasty stuff, like clogging arteries, damaging the lining of the gut, interfering with mood and focus, and the list goes on. Think of it this way: while whole foods have a beneficial effect, processed foods are poison, interfering with cellular

processes which are essential to our health. One sure way of promoting inflammation and oxidative stress, clogging arteries, and impairing your body's ability to regulate insulin is to continue eating processed foods.

In addition, processed and refined foods are incredibly damaging to brain function. Foods which are high in refined sugar have extremely detrimental effects on the brain, impairing overall brain function, as well as potentiating or worsening the symptoms of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. What makes the impact of processed foods on the brain even more insidious is the fact that many of the substances found in processed foods cannot be flushed from brain tissue once they enter, so they continue to exert their harmful effects long after they have been introduced into the body.

I always encourage my patients and clients to read every label on food items while they peruse the grocery store aisles, so they steer clear of preservatives, sugar, hydrogenated oils, artificial flavors and artificial colorings. A good general rule to follow is if there are more than five ingredients on a food label, or if there are a bunch of big terms which seem alien and strange to you, chances are

## ***“Processed and refined foods are incredibly damaging to brain function”***

that the item has questionable nutritional value and should be avoided. I have developed such an

aversion to packaged foods over the years that as soon as I see a food item in a bag, box or can, I tend to avoid it.

This is especially important when you're stuck at home and you're either stressed out, bored, or depressed, because those are the times when you are at your weakest and the most prone to make poor food selections. If you don't buy it, you won't be tempted to eat it. If you're the type of person who frequents fast food drive through windows, break the habit, even if you need to take a different route home from work to avoid your favorite fast food joint.

I know some of you are thinking, “Wow, it would be so tough to avoid processed food all the time!”, but in actuality, it isn't difficult at all. An important first step in revamping your food habits is clearing out your pantry and refrigerator



of any processed foods, thus wiping the slate clean. Once you have cleared out your space, it's time to select single ingredients over packages with ingredient lists which look like essays, and fill up your crisper with fresh vegetables and fruits. Some of you might complain that you are so busy that it would be a waste to buy fresh fruits and vegetables because they would just rot. For you folks, I recommend purchasing frozen (NOT canned) produce which you can easily thaw out and cook whenever you need to. Make sure to select whole grains if you eat grains, opt for lean cuts of meat and poultry, and avoid the cookie and candy aisles at all costs.

An interesting thing begins happening to people when they completely eliminate sugars and processed foods from their diets. They experience increased energy, clearer skin, fewer aches and pains, and lower body fat. Individuals who have been eating clean for a while and decide to have a sinful treat like pizza, a fast food burger, chips, cake or cookies will notice a detrimental effect on energy, a return of aches and pains, and brain fog.

I have personally noticed that on the rare occasion when I have a few bites of birthday cake or a greasy food like French fries, my digestion is completely thrown off whack and I

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feel sluggish and achy. In other words, processed foods make me feel heavy and tired, while clean, light, fresh foods make me feel energized.

And if you think it's tough to cook clean meals, it really isn't. A chicken breast can easily be marinated in simple marinades while you are at work (a favorite of mine has Bragg's Amino Acids, apple cider vinegar, and sesame oil...yummy!), then placed in your broiler to cook. Add some steamed vegetables, and maybe a small serving of riced cauliflower, and you have a healthy, low carb, nutritious meal which is a snap to make!

I understand that it can be challenging to find the time to eat whole foods each day, but I am telling you that it is well worth it if you intend to take control of poor eating habits and possibly even reverse disease processes in your body. Give it a try...you will probably love it.

-Dr. Stacey Naito



*Dr. Naito focuses her energies on a combination of pain relief, physical medicine, wellness, preventative health, and nutritional optimization to aid patients in achieving pain free, healthy and happy lives. Dr. Naito has also spent her entire adult life harboring a strong passion for fitness.*

*She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Science from Occidental College and began working as a fitness trainer immediately upon obtaining her degree. Weight training became an integral part of Dr. Naito's daily routine, even during her post-doctoral residency training. Dr. Naito's interest in fitness grew into an all-consuming and life-shifting focus when she began competing in the Bikini Division of the National Physique Committee (NPC) bodybuilding world in 2009. She competed in 21 events, achieving IFBB Professional Status in July 2013, and competing in 4 Pro events before retiring from the competition stage.*