

Ask Joe Weider: Ordinary fruits just as good as "super" ones

by Joe Weider

Tip of the Week: Read the label before buying that food or beverage!

So many of us are accustomed to walking into the grocery store and simply pulling packages off the shelves and throwing them in our baskets without checking anything more than the price. That needs to change.

While it's difficult to completely avoid artificial ingredients, we can all make sound nutritional choices by paying attention to what is in the processed foods we eat and making sure that the bulk of our nutrition comes from whole foods. That means eating vegetables and fruits, meats and whole grains as opposed to TV dinners and freezer aisle pizzas.

When food is processed, it is often stripped of valuable micronutrients as well as fiber, which is vital for proper elimination of waste. Vegetables, grains and fruits like apples and pears are all rich in fiber, while fish is a good source of essential fatty acids and nuts and seeds provide healthy fats and protein. Beef is a naturally occurring source of creatine, which is great for building and maintaining muscle.

Of course, in today's fast-paced world we all find ourselves making food choices in the name of expediency. Yet you don't want to rely on supplements or processed foods as your main source of nutrition. Think of them as an add-on to your whole food diet.

Q: Is it possible to get a good workout using only bodyweight exercises as opposed to going to the gym and lifting weights? I have rheumatoid arthritis, and sometimes it's hard enough to move and grip things, let alone lift weights.

Joe: You can most definitely get a comprehensive workout without lifting a single weight. Of course, as a strong advocate of the benefits of weightlifting, I believe there are things you can accomplish with a weight-based workout that you cannot with a bodyweight one. Nevertheless, for the person looking to get into shape and not become a bodybuilder, the differences are negligible.

Take a look at gymnasts. They often have fantastic musculature and conditioning to go along with their strength and flexibility, and all of their training is bodyweight-only. Of course, you probably don't have access to the specialized equipment, like rings and uneven bars, that they have. Still, with a minimum of home equipment you can get in a great full body workout.

I would suggest you get yourself a chinning bar, and even the newer, more advanced one with the straps attached that allow you to do modified ring movements. A company called GoFit has one that looks quite good. Also, a pair of pushup bars or the newer Perfect Pushup handles can help you get the most out of your pushups. Between the chins and pushups, you have most of your upper body covered.

Add to this walking lunges and one-legged squats for your thighs, standing one-legged toe raises on a step for calves, and hanging or lying leg raises and crunches for abdominals, and you have a full workout that doesn't have you lifting a single weight.

Q: What are your thoughts on all the "super foods" that are being advertised today? I'm talking about acai, goji, noni and mangosteen, among others. These are all supposed to be nutritional miracles, able to cure anything and everything that ails you. Do you know anything about them, Joe?

Joe: In short, I'm not convinced that any of these much-hyped products are any better than all of the wonderful fruits commonly available, and for much less money, at your local grocer.

I did a little research on these exotic fruits, and while they certainly do have healthful nutrients, they are not the wonder foods marketers would make them out to be. If you have the money and want to take them, that's fine – no harm done to anything but your pocketbook.

My advice, however, would be for you to simply buy fruits like blueberries, strawberries, apples, oranges, pears, bananas and a variety of other "common" fruits at the supermarket and enjoy similar benefits and their taste, while saving a whole lot of money.

Joe Weider is acclaimed as "the father of modern bodybuilding" and the founder of the world's leading fitness magazines, including Shape, Muscle and Fitness, Men's Fitness, Fit Pregnancy, Hers, Golf for Seniors and others published worldwide in over 20 languages.

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