

## **It is all about balance**

**By Susan D. Koepp, NP, E-RYT**

Susan graduated from the NP program at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, VA in 1978. She has practiced in a variety of settings including Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Urgent Care, College Health, Women's Health and Reproductive Endocrinology. Her 30+ years of practice have prepared her to deliver quality healthcare and while Susan is adept at managing acute and chronic medical illnesses, the focus of her practice is on wellness and prevention.

Here is her very sound advice on nutrition:



### **Food is complex**

There are numerous bio-active compounds in food that have physiological effects in our bodies. Creating a balanced plate helps to ensure that we get a mix of healthful nutrients without an excess of any one nutrient. Using the concept of balance allows us to translate complex nutritional science into a simple food message. Balance means: fill half your plate with colorful vegetables and/or fruit, one quarter with high-fiber complex carbohydrate-rich foods and one quarter with health-promoting protein-rich foods.

When your plate lacks colorful vegetables and fruit, your plate becomes heavy in carbohydrates, protein, fat and calories and light in fiber and antioxidants. This leaves us feeling unsatisfied and susceptible to overeating. Plus, you are missing out on beneficial, positive nutrition. Most people are motivated by the impact that eating more vegetables has on weight loss. There are few weight loss strategies that encourage eating more and this is one of them. When you increase non-starchy vegetables and decrease the amount of carbohydrate-rich and protein-rich foods on your plate, you will decrease calories but increase the volume of food that you eat.

### **About kids (and spoiled adults)**

A balanced plate is also great for kids. It exposes them to multiple foods, which promotes acceptance to a wider variety of foods. Plus, you are able to introduce multiple foods at each meal, so that if your child doesn't care for broccoli, they've got other options on the plate that they do like...and this keeps you from becoming a short-order cook.

### **About Timing**

You know that you are eating balanced meals and snacks when you feel physically hungry every 3-5 hours. For most people, that means eating breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus one snack. This snack is often in the afternoon between lunch and dinner. Some people will do better eating three meals only and others prefer eating 6 times a day. There's no perfect pattern but, when you are hungry more often than every 3 hours, you are likely not eating enough and/or not eating balanced meals. You may also be confusing physical hunger with thirst, fatigue or emotions. When you aren't hungry and it's been more than 5 hours, then you probably ate too much overall or your previous meal was unbalanced with too much fat or protein.