Shopping Recommendations

- **Shop mostly from the exterior aisles of the grocery store.** These aisles include fresh produce, meat, dairy, dairy alternatives, and frozen fruits and vegetables. Items in the middle aisles are usually highly processed and have expiration dates years out. The snack aisle, TV dinner aisle, and pastas are particularly

- **Shop 1-2x weekly.** This helps ensure that food eaten regularly is fresh not frozen. Block out time every week for approximately 1 hour of shopping during off-peak hours (at night or early morning based on schedule availability).

- **Save money by not buying organic from the “Clean Fifteen” list:** Avocados, sweet corn, pineapple, onions, papaya, sweet peas, eggplant, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, kiwi, cauliflower, mushrooms, honeydew melon, cantaloupe.

- **Buy ORGANIC when choosing from the “Dirty Dozen” list.** Strawberries, spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, nectarines, apples, grapes, cherries, peaches, pears, bell peppers/hot peppers, celery tomatoes are often sprayed heavily with pesticides.

- **Follow the 80/20 rule.** 80% of the food eaten should be in the form of whole food while the other 20% may be minimally processed. A higher whole food to processed food ratio is better but it can be difficult and more expensive for all foods eaten to be “whole”, especially when buying organic. Start with 60/40 then increase whole foods

- **Go green.** Fill most of your cart with fresh, colorful produce. This becomes easier during warmer weather as it’s possible to purchase produce from local farms, stands, or farmer’s markets.

- **Check the ingredients.** Look for foods that contain 5 or less ingredients which can easily be pronounced. The more ingredients listed, the greater the chance that more preservatives, sugar, salt, and other unnecessary things are added to make the food hyperpalatable. Hyperpalatable food like potato chips are easy to overindulge in.

- **Avoid man-made ingredients:** high fructose or regular corn syrup, maltodextrin, aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, agave (higher fructose content than high fructose corn syrup), food coloring and dyes, hydrogenated vegetable oils due to trans-fats, and sodium nitrate/nitrite. The best food preservatives are all natural: salt, alcohol, and vinegar.

- **Plan ahead by making a list.** Choosing a few recipes beforehand and buying what is needed helps cement healthy buying habits. Going to a store unprepared can lead to impulse buying. Avoid shopping when hungry! This makes impulse buying much more difficult to resist.

- **Buy seasonally.** Look for foods that are appropriate for the season and grown locally if possible. For example, cooling foods like salad, watery fruit like melon, and leafy greens are great for the summer. Warming foods like stew, chili, and soup are excellent in the winter.
Eating (and drinking) Recommendations

- **Start a food log.** Recording everything eaten and beverages consumed that contain calories. There are often large discrepancies between what we “think” we are eating and drinking versus reality.

- **Meal prep for the week.** Cooking a few days in advance makes it easy to eat well during the week. Portioning food into glass or plastic containers takes out the guesswork for lunch and dinner.

- **Pick out a couple areas of concern to modify.** Choosing one or two things to change is more beneficial than trying to modify all aspects of a diet at once. For example, if two cans of soda are consumed daily, set a goal to consume one can daily. Or, if many sweets are consumed often throughout the day work to reduce that and incorporate more whole foods during mealtime.

- **Eat for long-term success not short term results.** Crash course diets, very low calorie diets (>800 calories/day), low calorie diets (>1200 calories/day), fad diets (Atkins, keto, juicing), are very difficult to sustain long term. Extreme diets are appropriate for athletes and those with previous dietary experience but not the typical pain patient. Pick a dietary approach that can be adhered to for at least 60 days with the flexibility to be modified to last years.

- **Eat large meals earlier in the day rather than at night.** Numerous studies have shown that dieters who consume breakfast helps with weight loss. Calories consumed earlier in the day keep appetite in check and are readily available to use for work and physical activities. Watch out for binge eating and unconscious snacking. These habits often start late at night during and after dinner, especially if adequate calories were not consumed during the day.

- **Eat slowly until 80% full.** Eating until the point of fullness then stopping is the easiest way to prevent overeating. It takes several minutes for the brain to catch up with the stomach. Eating slowly helps bridge this gap as well.

- **Reduce food variety and palatability.** Highly palatable foods almost always have added salt, sugar, or are fried and processed. Eating meals that contain 3 or less combinations of food (a protein like fish, a carbohydrate/whole grain such as quinoa, and cooked or raw vegetables) is suggested to avoid overeating. Eating buffet style meals confuses the satiety signals.

- **Treat your sweet tooth right.** Buy 70-85%+ dark chocolate instead of candy, milk, or white chocolate alternatives that are high in sugar. Lindt, Ghirardelli, Altereco, Green & Blacks, Endangered Species, Taza, and Chocolove are all great choices. Cacao is full of healthy flavonoids which provide anti-inflammatory benefits.

- **Plan ahead when eating out.** Decide on what to eat before arriving at a restaurant. This discourages impulse buying similar to grocery shopping while hungry.

- **Eat breakfast before having caffeine.** Caffeine is a stimulant which can increase appetite and increase metabolism. Coffee can aid weight loss but it is best to consume after a high protein meal to avoid overeating, feelings of anxiety, and jitters. Matcha green tea or green tea are other great options with much lower caffeine content than coffee yet high in antioxidants.