So What Should We Eat?

Cynthia Peters

“Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

With these seven words, Michael Pollan, an expert on food, offers what may be the simplest and most effective advice about what to eat.

“Eat food.”

Buy whole foods, not processed food. If you do buy packaged food, read the label. If it has ingredients you can’t pronounce, don’t buy it. Cook your own food, so you know what’s in it. It is likely you will cook with less salt and less fat and fewer calories than you get when you eat out.

**ONE EASY TRICK:** Shop the perimeter of the grocery store. (See graphic on the right.)

“Not too much.”

In the last few decades, portions have been supersized! You know it’s easy to overeat when the size of a large popcorn at the theater is only pennies more than a small popcorn. Supersizing is just one of the reasons two-thirds of adults in the U.S. are overweight these days. Another reason people are gaining weight is the increase in high fructose corn syrup, which we started consuming in large quantities in the 1970s.

**ONE EASY TRICK:** Avoid high fructose corn syrup. Maybe this isn’t actually so “easy,” as high fructose corn syrup is everywhere! The problem with this corn-derived sweetener isn’t just that it is high in empty calories; it also makes you feel hungry even when you’re not.

“Mostly plants.”

You don’t have to be a vegetarian, but eating less meat could be good for your health. What’s wrong with meat? Many animals are raised on huge factory farms, where they are fed genetically modified grains, treated with growth hormones, and pumped full of antibiotics. These chemicals are concentrated in the animal’s flesh, and so we end up eating them in high doses. Many meats are also high in cholesterol and fat, which can cause heart disease and other problems.

**ONE EASY TRICK:** Think of meat as a side dish, not the main dish. Vegetables should take up two-thirds of your plate. Take it further and think of meat as a condiment—a small amount of meat can add a lot of flavor to a vegetable-based dish!

Cynthia Peters is the editor of The Change Agent.

**FIND OUT MORE:** See our website for Issue #28 on health, especially p. 45 on the history of corn syrup.