

Lesya Liu 0:01

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the new episode of You Can Exhale Now podcast. Today I am hosting Grace Goodwin Dwyer, who is a registered dietitian who specializes in women's health. Grace helps women feel empowered and confident about themselves through finding more peace with food and nutrition. She works from an intuitive eating issues to weight neutral perspective, and firmly believes that there is no one best diet because we are all unique. And she helps every woman feel really good in her body. Grace, welcome to the show.

Grace Goodwin 1:32

Hi, thank you. Thank you so much for having me today.

Lesya Liu 1:35

Thank you for coming. So tell us more about you know, how does nutrition for women differ from general nutrition and why women have to pay special attention to what they eat as compared to men?

Grace Goodwin 1:54

I'll start with saying nutrition for women, women's health is a huge category. You know, we see it as a specialty, but really, there's so many specialties within it. And the term women is complicated, too. It's a gender not a sex. So I see sort of women's nutrition falling into two big categories. One is nutrition for women is different, because not all women, but I'd say most women have female hormones, female body parts. And for those reasons, I guess it changes the way that we processed food a little bit. If having different levels of estrogen versus progesterone than men do, we are prone to different nutritional situations throughout our lives. You know, and if you have, if you're trying to get pregnant, or you do get pregnant, or you are breastfeeding, going through menopause, all of those have both hormonal and nutritional implications. So there's sort of a physiological side to it. On the other side, people who identify as women receive a lot of social messages about nutrition and about what their bodies are supposed to look like, and how they're supposed to eat. And I think even if people don't consciously realize that they're getting these messages, we are getting them all the time, from the moment we're a little all the way until they're adults, you know, even just scrolling through Instagram. So I think there is a pressure on women to eat a certain way, look a certain way that men do not experience in the same way.

Lesya Liu 3:40

Yes, yes, I agree with you. So let's talk a little bit about body image and intuitive eating. How do you go about working with your clients to make sure that they have a positive body image that they don't starve themselves to death, but also that, you know, they're keeping their nutrition balanced and healthy, you know, to the best of their ability.

Grace Goodwin 4:07

We're all born as intuitive eaters, right? So when we're babies, toddlers, we eat according to our hunger cues. And we don't really think about, we don't just think about eating, we don't have these externalized rules about how we need to eat or rules about how our body needs to look. So it's really over time. As we get older, that through the people around us through the media, through your family, whatever it is, we've learned to have more food rules, and we start eating less intuitively. So intuitive eating is essentially approaching food by really tuning into your internal hunger cues, and using those to guide how and what you're eating. It's quite simple in essence, but it's surprisingly hard to do in reality. So what I do with working with people is, depending where people are in that journey, I will try to have people reconnect to their hunger cues. So, if people are really used to restricting food, and it's, maybe they've been doing it for years, if not even decades, we'll start really small. We'll do a lot of kind of reflection of when you're eating, how are you feeling? How are you feeling before meals? How are you feeling after meals, in terms of both physiological feelings like hunger, as well as emotional feelings, like anxiety, or shame or guilt, and over time, you can reset with your mind in your body to be more connected with one another, so that you can eat in a way that's really sustainable. You don't really have to think too hard about

Lesya Liu 5:58

Mm hmm. And I think you know, as women, especially the our face is this just barrage of different diets and different, you know, posts on Instagram On Facebook, different articles about what we're supposed to eat, when we're supposed to eat, how much we're supposed to eat, you know, there are tons and tons of different diets. Oftentimes, they are very, you know, opposite to each other. Some say you know, avoid protein, others say avoid advances, avoid sugars. So, how does all of that kind of play into intuitive eating? And how can we truly understand what's best about what's best for us, not only in nutrition value, but also as enjoyment?

Grace Goodwin 6:57

Yeah, that is such a good question, there's just so much information online, which on one hand, is a wonderful thing, like it is a wonderful thing that we do, I'll have access to more information in this world. But when it comes to something like nutrition, it can be too much of a good thing sometimes. For example, in the news or on Instagram, we'll see things a lot. That will be like a headline from one nutrition study. However, we don't really get the context behind that. We don't know that. What has other research shown, you know, maybe this one particular study found good outcomes with people eating more fiber. Well, that's not a great example, because fiber is pretty well supported as being a helpful thing. But let's say there's one study that shows that eating a ketogenic diet is advantageous for health. You know, we're seeing that on Instagram. But we might not be seeing that there are 10 other studies that show the opposite. So I know I'm getting a little bit nerdy here and talking about research, but we really don't get the full story when we're on social media, or even just scrolling through the news. So and you're right, a lot of information is so conflicting, we see diets about eating, no meat, and then we see diets about eating all meat, and both are purportedly supposed to help you have more energy and a longer life. Right? It's kind of maddening to see. So what I come, where I come from, when it comes to

this is and I think most dieticians would agree with is essentially, it's a little bit cliché, but the concept of moderation. And then the ideal diet, there shouldn't be any foods where, or food groups where you're just outright saying no to. Of course, like there's an exception. Obviously, if you have a food allergy or you, you do have an intolerance to a certain type of food. But in general, any type of eating pattern completely cuts out an entire category of food is by definition restricted and therefore, is going to be problematic for eating intuitively, because it's going to impose some rules. Does that sort of get at what you're saying?

Lesya Liu 9:28

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So let's take it you know, a step deeper and really talk about your specialization, and that is women's nutrition. So, like you've already mentioned, you know, women go through multiple, very different stages in their lives, right from maybe teenage years where the body's still developing to then trying to get pregnant, being pregnant, giving birth, and then all the way to menopause. Can you talk about the difference in nutrition to support all of those important stages in women's lives.

Grace Goodwin 10:09

Yeah, absolutely. So, in general, there are concepts that always apply. For all of us, not just women, we always want to be getting a variety of foods. We want to be eating enough food to fuel ourselves. To keep ourselves healthy, our muscles healthy, our bones, we always want to be getting elements, minerals, and fresh foods. So that applies throughout the lifecycle. And not just to women. Looking throughout the female lifecycle, there are certain nutrients, we'll get sciency. For a moment, if we're talking about nutrients, there's certain phases throughout the lifecycle where certain nutrients become more important. So for example, if we're looking at teenage girls iron is really important, because you might be starting to get your first period, sometimes for younger girls periods can be heavier as they're having that for the first time. And that means blood loss, which means we need to replenish more iron. Um, another example is for girls who are teenagers, calcium is more important than it is later in life, because you're still on a bone growth period, we kind of fast forward and look towards preconception. At that period in your life, if you're hoping to have the baby, kind of readying your body for that there's different nutrients to be looking at. So that we would be really wanting to maximize a nutrient called folic acid, which is really helpful early in pregnancy, to make sure that your baby right after an embryo forms to make sure its brain is developing correctly, it's final to basically, throughout pregnancy, there's a whole bunch of nutrients that we're looking at to help both mom and baby be healthy throughout that process. And then after pregnancy there, you know, if moms are breastfeeding, that changes their nutritional requirements. After the pregnancy moms might have that can be a tough time for people in terms of having body changes, you know, their body was one way they got pregnant, it was another way. And now it's a third way. You kind of navigate from a nutrition perspective, what does that look like? And then zooming forward, I know we're kind of going at work speed here throughout the life cycle moving into menopause. A lot of people during that phase will experience different discomforts, whether it's hot flashes, you might have a decrease in bone mass, and there are some nutritional strategies you can do

throughout that phase. So one thing is focusing on more calcium again, just like we did in our teenage years. Another example is as we age, and we just naturally start to lose a little bit of muscle mass, it's a good time to start thinking more about protein again. So that was kind of just like a highlight reel of different phases of the life cycle and different nutrients that we'll be looking at.

Lesya Liu 13:22

And, you know, you've named a lot of different elements and vitamins. Is it possible to fully get everything your body needs from the food you're eating? Or do we have to turn towards supplements, right? different food supplements to truly get all that our body needs?

Grace Goodwin 13:51

I think that yeah, this is an excellent question, one that I find most clients have, and one that I I work with, and advise people on often. So we'll start by saying that we always want to try to get as much of our nutrients from food as we can. Studies have shown that basically our nutrition is more active when it comes through food, for lack of a better word, our body absorbs it better. That said, depending on your lifestyle, depending on if you have any particular medical conditions, and then depending on the phase of life you're in, so pregnancy versus perimenopause, for example, it might be helpful to have a supplement. I think of it more as an insurance policy or kind of like a safety net below you. It might catch kind of any little gaps that you have, but it's not our main line of defense. So I guess it's like an emergency parachute. Maybe that's the best. The best analogy there. What I do think is, ideally, with supplementing, you do it in a somewhat targeted approach, I don't think it's helpful to just take a multivitamin and kind of hope for the best. I think what's more helpful is to either on your own or with a healthcare provider, really take a look at what you are getting in your diet, and where might you have a gap, and then supplement accordingly into that gap. So, for example, if you are vegan, you are probably not getting any v 12. Because that only comes from animal products. So, you might not. You probably don't need to supplement a lot of your other B vitamins, but you would need to supplement that one as an example.

Lesya Liu 15:54

And let's say you know, you eat pretty well quote, unquote, you know, seeking to really take your nutrition game to the next level, and feel really good about your food choices and what you are nourishing your body with, do you have any kind of tips or suggestions where this people should be looking towards?

Grace Goodwin 16:20

Hmm, let's see. So, yeah, a lot of us eat pretty well and are kind of but are looking for like, Is there something better I could be doing? This is a great time just to make a plug for dieticians, it's a great time to meet with a dietitian, because we can be that person who knows what to look for, or where you might have gaps. And it can also be really helpful just to kind of go through your life, your routine, what you eat, how you feel about certain foods. And that exercise alone,

kind of talking that through with someone can really teach you a lot about yourself. Food is something that we deal with everyday a couple times a day but we think about it a lot. But it's not often that we step back and analyze it as if from the outside in that way. So in terms of practical strategies, people can do a cipher meeting dietician, meeting with the dietician, there's lots you can do on your own. I would say one, everyone is different. We all have different needs. But one blanket strategy that really can apply to most people is trying to eat more plants. I know this sounds probably a little bit cliché, because we've all heard forever that fruits and vegetables are helpful, but no one wants to eat. But I think we're seeing a lot of I've been seeing a lot of really compelling interesting evidence recently about how your gut health and gut health is really big right now, because we're finding that your gut health is basically connected to your everything health, your skin health, your brain health, your emotional health, it's, we're increasingly finding that that so much of that originates in your gut, you know, your intestines, basically. And there's really good research coming out that shows that your gut health is directly connected to the diversity of plants in your diet. So one thing that's cool is plants doesn't just mean fruits and vegetables, it can mean nuts, seeds, spices, different kinds of greens, you know, grains get vilified a lot in our recent low carb trend, but thinking about you know, have you tried qinhuai, Ferro, freekeh, amaranth, millet, there's all these fun greens out there. So I would say one thing to consider if you're not doing it already, is if you want to level up your nutrition game. Even if you're eating fruits and vegetables already and you feel like you're doing okay. Can you eat a wider variety of them? Can you try new ones? Can you switch up your greens? For example, you know, you might be eating broccoli every night. And from one perspective that is great because you're eating a vegetable every night. But you know how many more nutrients and how much more interesting tastes and pleasure could you get if you mixed it up with it. So the diversity of plants I think is a cool new thing that's showing some promising research that a lot of us can incorporate. Mm hmm.

Lesya Liu 19:41

And does it matter the way in which you prepare it so you know, for example, broccoli. We all know that we can eat broccoli raw, but what about you know if it's frozen broccoli if it's I don't know. Maybe you boiled it. Maybe you took another vegetable like sweet potato and you fried it or, God forbid, dip fry that much nutrition? Do you get out of all those different ways? And does it really matter if we should try to eat as many raw plants as possible, or can we mix and match?

Grace Goodwin 20:26

Well, I will start out by saying that frozen and fresh are equally healthy. So frozen can actually be a great way to get your vegetables. I recommend it for single people, like if you live on your own, and you don't have a roommate or partner who lives with you and you find, you might find like, you buy vegetables, and they go bad quickly because you're only preparing them for one person. So having a frozen version that whenever you're ready, you can just take out quickly steam to reheat good to go that can be really helpful in terms of saving some money and reducing food waste. frozen vegetables are some people even say that they're more nutrient dense, because they're picked at the height of their freshness, and then quickly frozen, which

preserves all the nutrients. So first of all, to say frozen food or frozen fruits and vegetables are all good, go for it. In terms of how you're cooking your vegetables, you do lose minor amounts of something like antioxidants. Whether we're roasting or steaming, and there are minor nutritional differences and methods that you cook, I would say in general, though, is a negligible amount. And it's not really worth factoring into how you do prepare things, what I would think, or what I would say can be helpful for people is if you find yourself getting bloated a lot from eating a lot of fruits and vegetables, or you find yourself having any kind of intestinal discomfort, when you increase your fruit and vegetable intake, it can be helpful to cook them, it kind of gently starts the process of breaking them down so that your gut doesn't quite have to do so much work of digesting all that fiber. So what I recommend to people is that you just mix it up, you, you roast, sometimes you fry, sometimes you steam, you try things in a smoothie, you eat it raw, it's all good. If you're, if you're eating your veggies, it's really all good. Um, frying technically on the hierarchy would probably be towards the lower end. But honestly, you know, intuitive eating, if that's what feels good to you. Sometimes I say go for it.

Lesya Liu 22:44

Great. And can we talk about nutrition? During those days, those days that all we're familiar with, you know, nutrition during menstruation cycle, right before it right after it? What kind of recommendations to give to women? what they should be looking out for what they should be searching for more in their diet during those times?

Grace Goodwin 23:14

Yes, this is definitely a big component of nutrition for women. When you talk to women, they often know like, Oh, yeah, three days before, I'm craving this exact specific food. And sometimes people are very in tune with that for themselves. So my number one thing I would say for that is just to give yourself compassion. It is okay. You know, going back to intuitive eating and stepping away from nutrients for a bit. Our bodies are not robots, it is okay. If things fluctuate some points in the month, we might eat less chocolate, and then at some points in the month, we might be feeling like we're eating chocolate, and it is okay. And it is better to accept that lean into it, give yourself permission and then be able to enjoy it without the shame that accompanies it. If we have a lot of shame, or guilt when it comes to Well, let me rewind that a little bit. If we restrict things that our body really wants, and really needs, we might short term be okay with avoiding them. Long term because our bodies are sneaky. We will probably encounter that food and because we've been restricting it so long eat more of it than we want to. It's a natural response. If you've been deprived of something, then when you encounter it, you want to, you know, make the most of it. Yeah, so if we are continuously restricting our food, then when we do finally encounter that food, we're more likely to overeat it. You can think of a pendulum like if you play back really far in one direction, it's more likely to swing farther to the other direction. So rather than this pendulum effect where we restrict something, and then we crave it even more, and then we have all this chain, so the restricted again, pendulum goes to the other side, you can you get the point, it's kind of better if, during those days where you might

be having cravings that are abnormal, that you might normally feel guilty about to accept it, eat some of it, give yourself that moment and move on.

Lesya Liu 25:34

Mm hmm. So would you say that that's the best way to kind of reduce those cravings associated with menstruation?

Grace Goodwin 25:41

Um, I would say yes, you know, there are like, nitty gritty details of, you know, depending on your symptoms, or what might be certain foods that could help may not help that might not help for everyone. You know, for example, if you're having interruptions in your sleep or your rest during that phase, eating something like cherries might help because it has a little bit of natural melatonin in it. So that's one example. But I think it's more beneficial for more people to just just allow yourself to experience the different feelings, eat accordingly, and then be able to, to move on from it and not not have that shame and guilt accompanying that.

Lesya Liu 26:30

Mm hmm. Yeah. So let's talk about, you know, different nutrients that we should try to incorporate more during our periods. You know, I think a lot of people experience all kinds of symptoms, from feeling bloated to feeling out of energy to maybe having very painful experiences. So if we were to turn to nutrition, what are your recommendations to make those days as easy as possible, and as enjoyable as they can be?

Grace Goodwin 27:08

I would say in terms of bloating, you know, when we're bloated, we feel really full, you might almost even feel like you're full of water to some degree. And ironically, one of the great ways to address that is by drinking more water can kind of feel counterintuitive to people sometimes like, oh, if I feel like I'm about to pop, then adding more water doesn't seem smart, right. But actually adding water can kind of help rebalance things and help reduce bloating. So that is one thing that is helpful. adding water to it does not have to be in the form of just plain normal water. You can drink herbal teas, you can have sparkling water you can have, if you really don't love water, it's fine to do water with like a little splash of juice in it if that's what gets you to drink it. But yeah, water during times of being bloated is a really helpful one. There are other nutrients that are associated with different symptom reductions. I believe magnesium is helpful for some people when it comes to cramps, but I'm tentative to give blanket advice. You know, without knowing exactly what's going on for someone, and, and something that works for someone when it comes to something like that might not work for other people.

Lesya Liu 28:37

Mm hmm. That makes sense. Absolutely. Would you say, you know, I've heard the thing that women should kind of incorporate more protein into their diet as they go through periods, you

know, because they're losing blood. And so does protein really help to regain that kind of balance?

Grace Goodwin 29:00

So we do yeah, it's iron. It was what we lose from when we have our period through blood loss. So iron your iron needs for women are there, they're high throughout your life, and then they actually go down. Once you're older and you're not getting your period anymore. So definitely get that means we definitely want to be getting enough iron. It's not something that would have like an immediate effect. So for example, if you have your period and you are losing, you know, you're having an iron loss, and you eat a steak, you know, something super high in iron. It's not necessarily a difference that I think you're going to feel right away. What is more important is kind of just always consistently making sure that we're getting some forms of iron throughout the whole month, not when we're just in our menstruation cycle. But throughout the whole month, that way we are replete, and we're not at risk for being deficient when we do lose some blood.

Lesya Liu 30:07

Mm hmm. And let's talk about, you know, nutrition. During pregnancy, I think that's a whole, probably a whole topic in itself. But it's interesting how some women tend to eat much more, they get a lot more cravings, while other women, you know, are so sick, they can't even look at foods. They look at celebrities, some of them even lose weight after giving birth to a child, which is usually not the case for most, you know, common women and situations they're in. So can you talk a little bit about nutrition and how you can really balance it during pregnancy, and then of course, during postpartum to truly, you know, maximize your health and really help your child get everything they need in terms of nutrition.

Grace Goodwin 31:06

Yes, so, again, this is something where it depends very much on the individual and your lifestyle, and your needs will be different, whether you're vegetarian, or you're really active and things like that. So on the individual level, there's a lot to consider, but also plenty to consider just kind of at a broad population level. And this is one of my favorite, absolute favorite topics, because it's really the only time in life where what one person eats so profoundly affects two people at the same time. So throughout pregnancy, yeah, you're right, some people feel completely sick. Others do not experience nausea quite to that degree. Usually, for people who experience that nausea in the first pregnancy, I'm sorry, the first trimester tends to feel better. By the time the second trimester rolls around, and are ready to eat a bit more food. So one thing that we can think of is there are different needs, there's technically different slightly different nutrition needs by trimester. And that corresponds with what's going on for mom, and what's going on for the baby. So walking through kind of a quick overview trimester by trimester, the first three months, your baby is teeny, teeny, tiny, we talked about fully earlier, this is a really key time for the nutrient called folate, which comes in a lot of fruits and vegetables. But if mom's feeling really sick, and it's not an option to eat those, it is okay, because there's also plenty of it in a prenatal vitamin. That's especially important in that first trimester, because that nutrient

helps the baby's brain and their brainstem and their spinal cord all start to form like in a very small version. By the time the second trimester comes around, usually mom's feeling a little bit better. And at that point, the baby is starting to go faster. So it's laying down muscle, it's laying down bone. And so this is more so the point where people might start to feel really hungry, and are needing more protein, more calcium, more of those nutrients to help literally build that little baby's body. By the time the third trimester rolls around, and people start to, sometimes people really start to feel big and uncomfortable. A lot of that is continuing to eat protein to drink fluids, to get what you need to help your baby develop. But a lot of that is also kind of symptom management for mom. You know, if your baby is starting to get big and take up space, there might be a matter of you might be having heartburn or you might be having digestive issues. So what are things that you can eat to kind of ameliorate that. It might be something like small frequent meals, or avoiding any trigger foods if you have acid reflux. So long story short, you can see as you go through pregnancy, there's kind of different different phases of what nutrients are important when, but that's kind of nice talking from a dietitian brain when it comes to just thinking about this as just a normal human being who's wanting to do their best. Again, going back to eating a variety, so eating as many different types of foods as you can. If you eat animal proteins and eating eggs, eating different types of meats, you Fish, when it comes to vegetables, eating lots of different ones, drinking plenty of water, and eating enough, so eating in accordance to your hunger, that is, if you do that, you don't really have to sweat all the nutrients that I just walked us through. But that's kind of looking at the coin from two different sides. And I know you asked about postpartum nutrition too. So it's so hard with postpartum nutrition, because I think partly due to Instagram and social media in general. Like you said, with celebrities, there's this ridiculous pressure to bounce back quickly. Which, you know, we don't see what goes on in these celebrities' lives and the fact that they have personal chefs, and nannies, and all of these things that makes their reality really different for the rest of ours. So that can be something that is psychologically really hard for some moms. One thing I would really recommend is, if you are when it comes to weight loss postpartum, that when it comes to immediately and after you've just had your baby, it's really a time to think more about nurturing your baby, nurturing yourself, taking it easy, nourishing yourself. There's not, there's not a huge rush to, you know, get back to the gym or get back to get back to some super perfect lifestyle, because that it's really a special time for moms need to just kind of take care of themselves and nurture themselves and be gentle with themselves, if that makes sense.

Lesya Liu 36:48

Yeah, yes, absolutely. And so I guess my last question is, is it really possible to lose weight and sustain that lost weight without exercise? I think you know, again, a lot of articles and information shows that there is this superfood that if we eat enough of it, we just start magically losing weight. But is that really possible this out the second half of the equation, which is being active, exercising in any way you see, fit and enjoy it?

Grace Goodwin 37:25

You've saved a very, you've saved a very difficult question for last, because I think there's a lot of different components that go into this. So firstly, I would say that, yeah, we can never when it comes to health, you know, we like to put labels on things and separate them, like, you know, you've got nutrition, you've got mental health, you've got fitness, but at the end of the day, these things aren't really separate. They're all totally woven together, your nutrition affects your activity levels, and your emotional health affects your activity levels. And all of these things are kind of all intertwined in a web more so than in separate categories. So I would say, it is absolutely important to do some kind of movement. What that looks like, every type of person might be different. I don't think everyone needs to necessarily go out and run a marathon or become a weightlifter or anything like that. But I would say if people want to be healthier, you do need to move your body in some kind of way, not just for, you know, whatever outcomes you're looking at in terms of your body shape, or your body size, but also just for your stress levels, which, you know, are really connected to everything.

Lesya Liu 38:55

Mm hmm. Yeah, I have to agree with that. I think that it's very intertwined. All of it. So that was definitely a great holistic view on that. So thank you. Thank you for that. And thank you for this whole conversation. Hopefully, you know, every woman out there found something helpful, something useful for them, and that prompts them to take better care of themselves of their health, not only from nutrition, but also just taking that holistic view onto their life. Yeah, yeah. Thank you so much for this conversation.

Grace Goodwin 39:35

Thank you. Thank you.

Lesya Liu 39:37

And for those who are interested to learn more about grace and the work she's doing, all of her contact information, including website Facebook and Instagram will be available in the episode notes below. So definitely check those out.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>