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## LIVING WELL: Breaking down the Tom Brady diet

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By Joan F. Wright

Should our diet resolutions be to eat like Tom Brady?

It's hard to ignore the remarkable performance of Tom Brady this year and not question if it has anything to do with his "interesting" diet. Much has been written about Giselle and Tom's dietary approach, which includes aspects of the Mediterranean diet and excludes coffee and caffeine, white sugar, white flour, MSG, dairy, and nightshade vegetables. But is it the holy grail of diets?

Boston Magazine recently took to having professional registered dietitians, as well as a nutrition scientist, fact check the basis of Brady's nutritional choices. The results: you can't go wrong eating mostly plant-based foods. But there isn't such agreement about eliminating coffee, which has some benefits including heightening mental capacity and improving short-term memory. The suggestion here is to limit coffee intake to no more than three cups a day.

As for eliminating nightshade vegetables, no formal research has proven the claim that these may cause inflammation. The Arthritis Foundation even debunks this theory and calls attention to a study published in the Journal of Nutrition in 2011 that showed two such vegetables - yellow and purple potatoes - lowered blood markers for inflammation in healthy men.

Perhaps an allergy to solanine, a compound found in nightshade vegetables, may be the issue for some, however, this sort of allergy is rare. Solanine can increase histamine, which may result in an inflammation in sinuses, eyes and throat causing nasal congestion, postnasal drip, and itchy, watery eyes. Or, the intestinal tract can become inflamed from histamine as well, causing cramping,

diarrhea, nausea or vomiting. If allergic, these symptoms would occur within minutes of eating nightshade vegetables. An antihistamine can treat minor allergy symptoms; digestive symptoms will not be alleviated by over-the-counter digestive medications.

Dairy is another food group with mixed responses as to whether it's good or bad. The one thing all can agree upon is due to its high prevalence of legitimate intolerance or allergy in people, other calcium rich foods should be included in the diets of anyone who has eliminated dairy.

So is there a holy grail of diets?

Dr. David Katz of Yale's Prevention Research Center conducted a review in 2014 of every mainstream diet to compare medical evidence of each diet's claims. His conclusion? No one "diet" is superior; however, minimizing processed foods, and selecting ones that are "close to nature . . . is decisively associated with health promotion and disease prevention."

So, perhaps the best approach is to use good sense when selecting foods. Listen to your own body and don't be fooled by fads or what works for others. Keep a food diary and note what foods make you feel your best and which your worst. Is there any correlation between your diet and your aches and pains, upset stomachs, respiratory issues? Work in sync with your doctor; are there imbalances in your blood work that can be countered by your diet? Are you lacking certain vitamins or nutrients?

Pay attention to science proven facts. Plant-based foods are associated with lower risk of chronic diseases and therefore, are cited as the healthiest choices on the menu. That said, pouring a heavy cream-laden sauce over some of those veggies may negate that healthy choice! That's where the good sense comes in.

*Living Well is a monthly column provided by Joan F. Wright on behalf of the NVNA & Hospice. Wright is a Certified Dementia Practitioner with NVNA and Hospice, a non-profit home healthcare and hospice agency serving over 25 communities on the South Shore from Milton to Plymouth. For information call 781-659-2342 or visit*

