

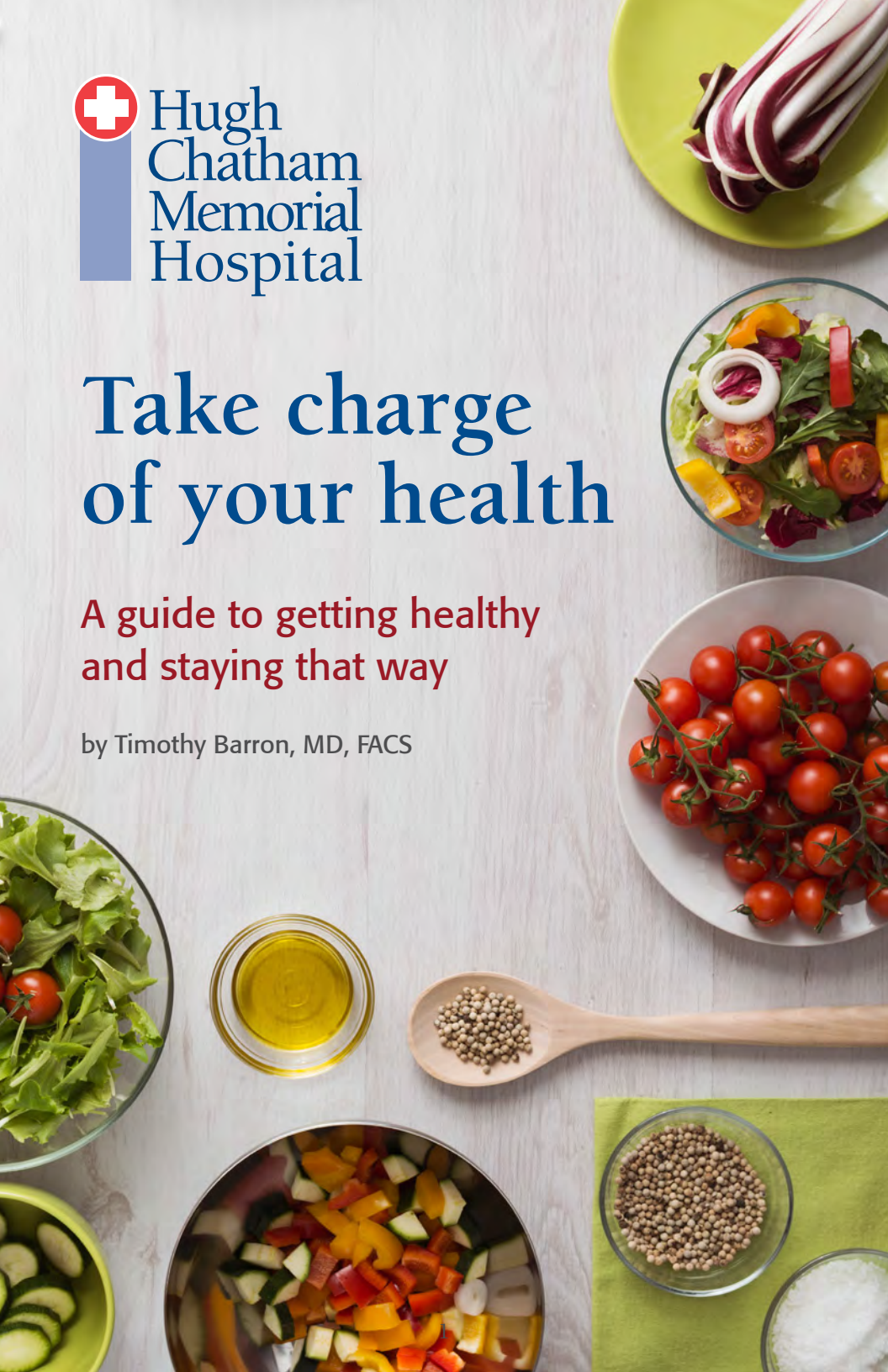


Hugh
Chatham
Memorial
Hospital

Take charge of your health

A guide to getting healthy
and staying that way

by Timothy Barron, MD, FACS



About

Dr. Barron and his passion for helping you take charge of your health



After meeting with patients in his office and later performing delicate surgeries in their abdomens in the operating room, Dr. Barron got to thinking about how they came to need surgery in the first place. He realized that many of his patients' health problems were rooted in lifestyle issues. So he decided to offer information and encouragement to help them improve their health to hopefully avoid needing other surgical procedures in the future.

"I see many patients who have been on a cycle of unhealthy eating, being overweight and not getting enough exercise for years," he explained. "It may have caused problems like gallbladder or liver disease, diverticulitis, hernias and other health problems so that they now require surgery to remove the organ or fix the problem. Smoking is also a contributing factor to some patients' poor health. It's a sensitive topic, but I wanted to offer information and encouragement to get people thinking about it."

This booklet was created to explain the importance of a nutritious diet in a way that's easy to understand. It also includes easy-to-prepare healthy meal and snack suggestions that Dr. Barron offers to his patients.

"I wanted to offer some practical information and encouragement to my patients so that – in the words of Dr. Spock on 'Star Trek' – they can live long and prosper," he said. "I can do many types of minimally invasive surgeries to help patients. But if I can help patients avoid the need to come see me again because they left here and took charge of improving their health – that's just as rewarding for me as it is for them!"

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Taking charge

Have you ever wondered how you can take charge of your medical problems, decrease your risk for cancer, feel better and live longer? It is quite simple. No physician or healthcare provider can do this for you. No single operation or medication can do this.

Only you can do this for yourself.

If you are overweight or obese, your risk is increased to develop diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, pulmonary disease including sleep apnea, heart disease, arthritis and chronic pain, circulatory problems, stroke, fatty liver and even liver failure. You are also at increased risk for a variety of cancers, including colon and breast cancer. You may already have some of these medical conditions. You may be on a number of medications to treat obesity-related illnesses. These medications have side effects and tend to be costly.

The single, most effective solution is to maintain a healthy body weight. Routine exercise is very helpful. If you smoke, you significantly increase your risk for poor health and malignancies.

Your primary care provider and other specialists have likely provided advice. We measure your height and weight to obtain a ratio called Body Mass Index (BMI). A healthy BMI is between 19 and 24.9. You are overweight if your BMI is between 25 and 29.9. You are considered obese when you reach a BMI of 30 to 39.9. A BMI greater than 40 is considered morbid obesity. Morbid implies that you have significant risks for debilitating medical issues and are at increased risk for sudden death.

This is not a joking matter. Diseases that develop as the result of being overweight or obese cause significant harm. The expenses to Medicare, Medicaid (and the taxpayer) and third party insurance companies are tremendous. It amazes me how many people joke about this. I hear comments like, "I can't do without my bread, potatoes, soft drinks or sweets," yet, the same individual may complain about back and joint pain and the number of medications they take. We must understand that food is an addiction not unlike tobacco, alcohol or cocaine. It is also just as dangerous to our well being.



Obesity and co-morbidities that result significantly increase your risk for complications if you require surgery. After surgery, you are at increased risk for Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT), Pulmonary Embolus (PE), cardiac arrhythmia, stroke or heart attack, respiratory distress, pneumonia and hernias. Any surgical intervention will be more technically difficult related to a fatty liver and a large amount of intra-abdominal fat. Hernia recurrence is high in the obese.

You will notice that I will provide counseling for weight loss in anticipation of an operation. Adherence to the guidelines is very important and potentially life saving. Two weeks on a low carbohydrate diet helps to shrink a fatty liver and intra-abdominal fat. This will enhance the technical aspect of the operation. If you are exceptionally overweight, I will require a greater weight loss for an elective operation.

Many obese individuals complain they have joint and back pain and cannot lose weight because they cannot exercise. You should be aware that studies have been completed which reveal that what we eat is more important than exercise in terms of weight loss. A combination of a healthy and nutritious diet with routine exercise is optimal, but how we eat is far more important.

“It is unfortunate we have accepted obesity as ‘normal’ in this society. Do not be fooled. Obesity is deadly.”

TIMOTHY BARRON, MD, FACS

Beware that there are many claims about herbs and nutritional supplements. The companies producing them make huge profits with their unsupported promises of long life and good health. Indeed, many of these supplements are detrimental to our health. There is no substitute for a nutritious diet.

The bottom line is: Obesity and related illnesses are avoidable and you alone can adjust your eating habits. Simply changing our diet is the most powerful way of taking control of our health.

We are responsible for our health and should not expect our healthcare providers to cure us when we alone can alter our lifestyles and enhance our well being. It is unfortunate we have accepted obesity as “normal” in this society. Do not be fooled. Obesity is deadly.

If you are a smoker, your risk for cardiovascular and pulmonary complications is increased. You are also at increased risk for infections and delayed healing. I strongly encourage smoking cessation. Studies show that those who stopped smoking two weeks before an operation have significantly fewer complications.





Healthy eating

There are some basic good habits to develop.
We should never overeat.

- 1** Breakfast is important, and missing this meal slows metabolism.
- 2** Avoid unhealthy snacks.
- 3** Foods high in protein, vegetables and fiber should be the backbone for this diet.
- 4** Avoid late evening meals.
- 5** It is better to eat 4 to 5 smaller nutritious meals during the day.
- 6** Drink plenty of water. Studies show that drinking a glass of water before a meal tends to decrease the numbers of calories you consume.
- 7** If family members don't want to participate, then prepare your meals separately or choose only the healthy items. You do have a choice.



What to avoid

Starchy foods: This includes bread, crackers, biscuits, corn, white rice, pasta (macaroni, spaghetti, etc.) and potatoes. If you are happy with your weight, it is okay to have some of these, but be sure you eat proper portions. For example, the average potato has two or more servings. Sweet potatoes are not a replacement for white potatoes. They contain the same amount of starch.

Sweets: This includes sweet tea, soft drinks, fruit juice – even if the label says ‘no sugar added’. (Fruit juices are high in fructose which is converted to glucose.) Also avoid pastries like cakes, pies, doughnuts and candy. Artificial sweeteners may be used.

“Fat-free” items: Do not be fooled by marketing. These foods tend to have added sugar.

Cereal: These items tend to have excess starch and sugar. If you consume these, be sure no sugar is added (artificial sweeteners are okay) and they should contain a minimum of 4-5 grams of fiber a serving. It is okay to add nuts, berries or non-sweet fruit. If you are trying to lose weight, avoid cereal and consume extra vegetables which will provide plenty of fiber, minerals, vitamins and antioxidants.

Junk foods: Potato chips, excess popcorn, Cheetos, pretzels, goldfish crackers have excess starch and/or fats. Eat fresh vegetables like celery with peanut butter, tomatoes with cottage cheese, cheese slices without crackers, fresh broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, or similar vegetables with or without reduced calorie ranch, vinaigrette, olive oil and vinegar, etc.

Low-fat salad dressing: These tend to have added sugar.

Fruit: If you are trying to lose weight, avoid fruit. Fruit is high in fructose, which is converted to glucose. Glucose is converted to fat. You will get all the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber you need with plenty of vegetables.

What to eat

Dairy: Milk, low-fat cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, sugar-free ice cream. Dairy is a great source of calcium, vitamin D and protein, and has been shown to increase metabolism. It’s great for breakfast and decreases the appetite later in the day. Some diets exclude dairy, but there are no convincing pure studies to argue against it.

Vegetables: Make them the major part of your diet. There is such a variety for all tastes. Frozen vegetables are less expensive and easy to prepare. Since frozen vegetables are flash frozen, they tend to retain vitamins, minerals and antioxidants better than fresh produce. Fresh vegetables are okay, too. Even canned vegetables are quite nutritious. There is no limit to how many vegetables you can consume. You should have several helpings a day. They are extremely nutritious with very few calories. (A pound of broccoli contains only 100 calories!) Experiment with ways to prepare vegetables. Expand your palate. Broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower, kale, spinach, carrots, cabbage... the possibilities are endless.

Meats and Fish: Any low-fat meat is okay. Avoid fried or breaded meats. Lean hamburger meat is okay, just avoid the bun. Chicken, white pork, low-salt ham, seafood. Fish is an excellent source of heart healthy Omega-3 fatty acids. Eat at least two servings of fish a week. You can have more of the smaller varieties (larger fish such as tuna contain higher levels of mercury).

Eggs: Eggs are high in nutrients and protein. It is a myth the cholesterol is “bad” for us. We make bad cholesterol from a diet high in starches and sweets!

Mixed nuts and lentils (beans): Almonds have less fat and more protein and fiber. Peanuts are the least nutritious. Nuts make a great snack and decrease hunger and overeating later. Low- or no-salt added is best. Avoid added sugar, like baked beans or honey roasted cashews and pecans. Pinto beans, green beans, navy beans, black-eyed peas are okay, just leave out the cornbread! (If you are on a strict no-carb diet, avoid beans and sweet peas, which do have some starch.)

Easy meals

Breakfast

One to two boiled eggs, broiled ham or slice of luncheon meat, a handful of grape tomatoes, a handful of fresh spinach or kale. This meal is packed with protein, vitamins and minerals or fiber. Studies show a meal high in protein and fiber staves off hunger and decreases the urge for unhealthy snacks.

Snacks

Fresh vegetables make a great snack. Broccoli and carrots with Ranch dressing is easy and healthier than peanut butter and crackers (the latter is loaded with starch and fats). A handful of mixed nuts is also satiating and healthy. Try rolling a piece of luncheon meat with a piece of low-fat cheese and a pickle or olives. The rolled luncheon meat replaces the bread. Sardines are packed with protein and have three times the Omega-3 fatty acids of the same weight as tuna. Tuna is fine for those who cannot stand the odor of sardines. Try it on a leaf of fresh kale or lettuce with pickle and choice of dressing.

Lunch

A grilled chicken salad or similar salad is quick and easy. It is also much healthier than the fries, rolls, breaded and fried foods in the cafeteria hot line. If you prefer a hoagie or sandwich, try removing half or more of the bread.

Dinner

Microwaved mixed vegetables and a piece of lean meat (grilled or baked chicken, pork or fish). My wife makes a great spaghetti sauce which I will ladle onto mixed veggies or a salad. I add a little Ranch for flavor. Leave the garlic bread and pasta.

Dessert

Try to curb the sweet tooth cravings. It is okay to eat a serving of fruit or yogurt. Do not eat the whole bag of grapes. Take your time, enjoy each bite and avoid overeating sweets. I find eating a dill pickle or a few olives curb my sweet tooth.





“Live long and prosper.”™

DR. SPOCK, “STAR TREK”

You can do this!

You can use these principles to create a variety of healthy snacks and meals. Remember, you are not eliminating “the good stuff.” You are eliminating the bad stuff.

The choice to be healthy is yours. There are many healthy diet cookbooks and recipes available in any bookstore or online. The Duke low-carb diet is very helpful. I will be happy to discuss nutrition with you. If you adopt the above principles you should enhance your health, sense of well being, and your longevity. Happy eating and health!

The phrase ““Live long and prosper” is a trademark of CBS Studios, 2010

Ready to make a change?

If getting more exercise is one of your goals, the Hugh Chatham Rehabilitation, Aquatic & Wellness Center in Elkin offers classes to help with weight loss, muscle toning and flexibility – from Aqua-cise in an 88 degree therapeutic pool to yoga, personal training and Bootcamp workouts. Many classes are available for just \$3 per class. For information, visit HughChatham.org or call 336-527-7468



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